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THE EVIL OF THE EAST.

KESNIN BEY.

THE
EVIL OF THE EAST;

OR,
TRUTHS ABOUT TURKEY.

TOLD BY
KESNIN BEY.

LONDON:
VIZETELLY & CO., 16 HENRIETTA STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.

1888

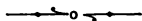
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PREFACE.

THE EAST! A magic is in the very word, that suggests fairyland, a paradise upon earth that we have loved in dreams and would fain affect in reality.

In fancy we see the blue waters of the Bosphorus glancing in sunlight, with grey and pink marble kiosques on either side; the hills above them covered with dark cypresses, with mimosas and balmy pines. Like giant lances the slender minarets stand out in sharp relief against the sky, while frail caïques dart ceaselessly across the azure stream, their oars lightly touching its surface, as lightly as the wheeling gulls that brush it with their wing.

On shore a medley multitude forever files past, a throng of strange types taken from all points of Europe, from Asia, from Africa, in dresses brodered with silk and gold,

and gay with many a rare and radiant dye. On all sides a very Babel of tongues is heard, and under the sombre vaulted bazaars the garish crowd moves on to the dim lighted mosque, where on richly-woven carpets from Smyrna or Bokhara the faithful kneel in prayer near lustrous columns of smooth porphyry and granite. See there, the fair Circassian girls, with eyes like flaming coals beneath their filmy *yashmak*; their talk in Turkish is as the language of birds, so soft, so caressing to the ear is it; and yet harmonious, vibrating as the chords of a lyre. And there, too, are the Sultanas, those mysterious beings who taste candied rose-leaves under the shade of broad leaved platana trees beside white marble fountains most rarely sculptured, while, as an evening mist across the leafy gardens of their retreat, the aromatic fumes of Lattaquieh or of Yenidjeh forever float.

The East! it is the sun; a globe of ore in fusion; gilding with its rich rays each cupola and spire; touching each roof with gold; lighting up each window at Scutari; shooting its flaming arrows into the deep waters of the Bosphorus; lending fresh lustre to the crescent that tops all the most stately buildings of the city. The East! we may liken it to the moon; to white Luna walking in her clear heaven, on some voluptuous tranquil night, amid the imposing hush and silence of created things; it is the cool night-wind that carries with it the perfume of roses which

in clusters hang above the swift dark Bosphorus stream. Yes; the East is all that; it is more; it is a poem, ever changing, ever new; a poem, visible, tangible, whose resistless charms possess the soul with subtle unimagined languors.

Such is the East! In such wise has it been pictured by many famous writers; rare spirits of fine temper and exquisite imagination. They spent there a few weeks of enchantment and in their first fervour recorded in feverish terms their feelings when in this trance of ecstasy. Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Théophile Gautier, Gérard de Nerval, Madame de Gasparin, Edmond About, all these succumbed to the spell.

Yes; the East is in truth such as these writers viewed it and described it; all that, but for a brief while only; its poetry is for the tourist who passes by, for the traveller who goes on his way, regretful, remembering.

For him who remains in the country, who strives to study manners, customs, who seeks to analyse the truths that underlie all this poetry, it is something far different. The East is fairyland, perhaps; but take good care never to spoil the charm by going behind the scenes. What change, what disillusion awaits you, in such case! Before the keen, stern gaze of the psychologist or the student of practical economy, all these fine outward shows give place to shameful realities; what had before allurements now

provokes repulsion ; the sense of deception strikes you to the heart and is as gall and wormwood in the mouth. then it is that one perceives in how far this fair land has been spoilt by the men who inhabit it ; this land so rich, so fertile, yields nothing but misery ; this clear, pure sky only covers horrors ; in these white palaces, dark crime has lodging, and in the midst of calm Nature, hypocrisy, selfishness flourish and take root. Mixed with the delicate perfume of jasmine, one may scent the foul odours of corruption.

It is, in truth, a people that is falling to decay in these marble mansions and at the side of these blossoming trees. Disorder, greed, ambition, vice, crime, all that mixes like the muddy inland streams that add their filthy tribute to the clear noble waters of the Golden Horn. In proportion as an observer looks deeper into the depths of life at Constantinople he stands aghast before this rottenness which seems limitless, which has so battered upon the fair body that now only the semblance of life is left.

The authors whose names have just now been quoted were not insensible to this reaction. They saw the reality, felt the disenchantment, but would not stay to consider it. It is told of one shrewd epicure, that when visiting Constantinople he refused to come on shore, but preferred to contemplate the city's loveliness from the deck of his yacht. As a prudent *dilettante*, he feared that landing

might create for him too cruel a deception ; and so he chose rather to preserve all the pristine freshness of his dreams about the place. Other authors, less circumspect, have soon crossed the threshold of disenchantment, but when face to face with astounding revolting realities, they turned away their eyes, exclaiming : " Do not spoil the East for me ; let it be mine still as I imagined it ! " . . .

This note of disenchantment is specially remarkable in the last chapters of De Amicis' book. Doubtless, in the back slums of Stamboul or of Pera, he met the real East face to face. Some unlooked-for episode ; some grim anecdote told to him at night by friends ; things casually noted in the day, all these were forced to break the spell and to plant within him the germs of unbelief. When he ends his book, it is with a tinge of disgust that contrasts strangely, ironically, with the note of enthusiasm of his first days in the city. Nausea overpowers him ; and he hastens to depart, so as to avoid the necessity of destroying his manuscript. The truth, indeed, is this, that the magical aspect of the city is but as a mask to hide the melancholy picture of a people in the last stage of decay. Social depravity, corruption, immorality, and enervation of character have sufficed to make both Mussulman and Christian rotten to the core. To-day, the taint is everywhere ; all have it ; it is not an empire that is breaking up ; it is a society that is perishing.

Often in my mind I have likened Constantinople to those women of pleasure, attractive, alluring from without, with smooth, clear skin, bright eyes, and pearly teeth ; but their beauty is false ; and from within a hidden malady saps their blood and transmits its poison to their lovers.

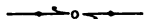
This dreadful malady, so common in Constantinople as to be almost endemic, the Turks, with touching *naïveté*, call *le mal rançais*. We would point out to them that this scourge had its origin in the East ; our ancestors brought it back with them as a souvenir of the crusades and of their sojourn in the Land of the Crescent. The French evil is really the Eastern evil, like leprosy, like cholera, like typhus, and many another infectious disease. Thus we commit a legitimate act of self-defence in re-naming it the Evil of the East, and in letting this title serve as the theme for our study in social and oriental physiology.

Thousands of times one has spoken of the Sick Man, but one has never ventured to state precisely the cause of his sickness. Such is the task that I set myself in this book. The consultation exacts a certain boldness, frankness of language. It also requires that firm will that refused to let the voice of truth be stifled by protest or recrimination.

Dreamers in plenty have sung the charms, the allurements of the intoxicating East. We must now go deeper,

we must probe the core of things, plunge the scalpel into the quivering flesh, lay bare the gangrenous sores, and reveal the causes that must make death imminent. Not the Ideal, but the Real engages us ; we must quit the East of our dreams ; we must enter the East of reality.

THE EVIL OF THE EAST.



CHAPTER I.

A TRAVELLER'S FIRST IMPRESSIONS.—DISEMBARKATION AND
DISENCHANTMENT.—THE DOGS OF CONSTANTINOPLE.—
CUSTOM-HOUSE OFFICERS AND BEGGARS.—FUGITIVE
THOUGHTS ABOUT GALATA TOWER.—THE DEFILE OF
NATIONS ON KARAKEUY BRIDGE.

ERE long the tourist will be able to arrive by the Oriental Express at Stamboul terminus, being well nigh worn out with the tedious journey from Adrianople to San Stefano. Giving up his ticket to an official in uniform as he leaves the station, he will find the usual cab, and the usual cabman waiting outside to transport him to his hotel. This will seem commonplace indeed, though by such a method of approach to the city he will have avoided the horrors of boarding the steamer at Varna, the inevitable sea-sickness in the Black Sea and all the irksome delays of quarantine. But on the other hand he may feel sure that in this way he has lost at least one half of all the charm of his journey.

Truly, nothing is more marvellous than the arrival at Constantinople by way of the Bosphorus; and it is this

route that the true tourist must ever prefer, if he be a real traveller, not a personally conducted one.

After a night on the Black Sea, the Austrian Lloyd steamer at dawn reaches the mouth of the Bosphorus. All the passengers, be they well or sick, scramble on deck, for the scene that opens out before them is perhaps the most beautiful in the world. It was here, at this point, that an English General once said to me, "Now sir, no more talk, no more questions ; open your eyes as wide as you can, and take in impressions that during your whole lifetime you will never receive again."

Passing the Symplegades rocks, whose fame lives in the legend of the Argonauts, the steamer enters this strip of sea, with its impetuous current, that divides two continents. The long files of villas (*yalis*) against whose marble steps the blue waves break to foam ; the irregularly built houses with arched windows guarded by wooden lattices and iron gratings, behind which, in fancy, whole batteries of bright eyes seem to lie in ambush ; the gardens, fragrant and shady with blossoming trees, with roses and glycinas that lean over the hedges and shake down their scented glories on to the eddying stream ; the graceful minarets placed here and there along the route ; the low, brown hills above, crowned with dark cypress, brushwood and pine ; all these things in harmony form one grand panorama that rivets the traveller's gaze, and that, once viewed, he can never, never forget.

There, on the right, is Buyukderé, and farther, Therapià, summer resorts, these, of diplomacy and its flunkys, and of all the would-be aristocracy of the Turkish capital. There is the Giants' Mountain, in majestic outline against the

sky, and there, poised on rocks, the towers of Roumeli and Anatoli Hissar. On the opposite bank stands the exquisite marble palace of Gucuksou, set like a white jewel to mark the entrance to the famous valley called "Love's Tourney." Here, in this romantic spot, the fair Turkish dames assemble on every Friday in autumn. Wrapped in their bright-hued *feradjis*, they walk or sit in groups on the emerald turf and sip sherbet in the green shade of plantain trees. See yonder, Bebek, with its picturesque fleet of fishing boats beside leafy gardens. Near it lies Arnaoutkeui, the bright little village by the waters' edge which but a year ago was wrecked in a night by fire. Now Beylerbey is reached—a grand palace whose chiselled marble front is reflected in the stream as by a mirror of steel. This sumptuous mansion for monarchs lies desolate to-day; silken hangings veil its broad windows; on its interior splendour no eye now looks; and of the rare and costly menagerie attached to it in the days of the strangled Sultan Abdul Aziz nothing remains save one superb tiger that, wearied and lonely, regrets the vanished day when the Padishah would give him a minister's bones to crunch.

When this point is reached, steamers in plenty meet the view; and caiques stud the water as one nears the great city. Suddenly it appears like some goddess, voluptuously stretched at length along the horizon, framed on the one side by the European faubourgs from which rises the Galata Tower, and on the other, by the holy town of Scutari. Further in middle distance one sees Kadikeui, the ancient Chalcedon; and in the distance the snow-powdered peaks of Mount Olympus with the azure sea of Marmara to the right.

As a centre-piece to the picture is Seraglio Point with its array of kiosques, of domes and cupolas, and its high crumbling walls, the barriers of this time-worn citadel of Sultans, where many a dark deed of blood and lust has been done. Hard by the palace is San Sofia, with its four minarets that speak to us of the sumptuous, turbulent period of Byzantine rule and empire. And on the Seven Hills thousands of wooden houses are grouped, whose tints of delicate brown or burnt-out red all blend into one harmonious stripe of colour, and above them the minarets like alabaster lances show clear in the cool grey atmosphere at dawn. Below, at the foot of Stamboul, the Golden Horn extends its surface which is thickly covered as with a net-work of interwoven masts and rigging.

As the steamer drops anchor, she is on the instant assaulted by a mimic fleet of pirates in the form of shouting boatmen, ragged porters, and servile interpreters, who make the unfortunate traveller their prey, pounce upon his luggage and would without scruple tear him asunder into four pieces, if from each piece *baksheesh* were obtainable. Why of course, a tourist who arrives for the first time at Stamboul not knowing the customs, nor the language nor the money of the country, of course such a person is a lawful prize, a very mine of riches unexplored! Young couples on their honeymoon or lovers are most sought after, for warm ardent hearts are ever generous!

To make such loud-voiced gentlemen hear, it is necessary to be as noisy as they. One must swing one's cane in the air in order to win from these imperious servitors respect. The wisest plan is to choose the best looking boatman from the mass, and to put yourself under his protection.

Then watch with what brutal egoism the fortunate pilot drives off other candidates for your favour as he takes possession of his passenger ! For henceforth the passenger becomes his property—something little more than fare and less than prey.

The boat brings you to the Police Bureau, where an official, who very often cannot read, scrutinises your passport and your person. All is in order ; you may pass on to the Custom-House, or rather float on, for the boatman has not yet finished his task. The guide who accompanies you will now hint that it is customary to apply silver ointment to the palm of the custom-house officer who examines your luggage. This functionary has already appraised you, taken stock of you, put his own rate of value upon you. You tickle his palm with one or with two white francs ; at once all is simplified ; the visit to the Custom-House becomes one of pure formality, or, to be more exact, the whole formality disappears. This is your first insight into Oriental life. The poor wretch of a Custom-House officer stands lowest on the scaling-ladder used by those thieves who, one and all, make resolute, impudent assault upon your purse. Is he to blame ? The luckless *employé* only earns about a sovereign or five-and-twenty shillings a month : and even that pittance is not paid to him.

When franked through the Customs, your luggage is hoisted on to the shoulders of a robust, swarthy Armenian, a native of the interior, from Trebizond or Sivas, and at his heels you make your entry to the glorious capital of Turkey.

The first thing for surprise is the squalid aspect of the streets, the pavement being formed of irregular blocks of

stone of all sizes and all shapes that present a bewildering succession of sharp angles and treacherous cavities. You trip over the former, and you slide with unpleasant suddenness into the latter. These pitfalls are full of black, fetid water; a swarm of pestilent flies broods there; and the pungent stink stifles you. A novice still, you give a side glance and look down at the mass of ordure that lines the thoroughfare; at rotting vegetables; offal over which dogs snarl and wrangle; here and there a cat with its head beaten in; an empty petroleum tin; and many broken bottles and pots. Curled up on the sun-scorched flagstones lie numberless dogs, shaggy, mangy, diseased, and covered with scars and bleeding sores. As you see all this, the vanguard of the beggars makes its assault upon you, whining in Greek, in Italian, in Spanish, and French. Such is their insistence, that they pluck you by the sleeve and pat your shoulder while uttering deafening wails both singly and in unison. To escape their importunity you walk on as fast as possible, taking swift strides across the narrow, dirty streets, bordered by the rows of brothels which are near the Custom-House at Galata. Brushing past evil-looking louts who reek of mastic and garlic, you mount the dusty fetid street leading up to Pera. On the heights above, fleas in thousands and bugs in hundreds of thousands await your advent, not to speak of mosquitoes, gad-flies and Dame Nature's other instruments of torture.

By our drawing this pleasant picture for him, the reader must not imagine that we hold a brief against the East. To do so, were puerile. It is evident that Constantinople cannot resemble either Paris or Vienna; the perpetual *laissez aller* in all this is the essential feature in Asiatic life. One can

never hope to change the cardinal points, or to put the West in the East. If ancient Byzantium had straight, even, clean streets, well kept, well lighted, it would be as monotonous as any other European capital. It would lose all its local colour. All these petty signs of wretchedness should provoke neither anger nor chagrin. The best way is to take all with a light heart.

Still, there ought to be reforms ; and the public streets might be made better and more presentable, if only the municipal authorities had more money. All could be washed and swept and garnished ; the question is merely one of patience. The evil, the real evil, for which we reserve our criticisms, is the moral disorder, the soiled morality, the putridity of character everywhere discernible. On that score Constantinople is past cleansing ; and no municipal broom nor any disinfectant could ever make the city sane.

As regards the filth of the streets one might criticise the utter nonchalance of the police and of the inhabitants, who will let a dead dog lie rotting in the sun for ten days before their door rather than trouble to pitch the carcass into the Bosphorus. In Constantinople one would rather be in a bad way than in a good way. Because this last is only obtainable by taking trouble ; and no one will ever take trouble.

To have an idea of what Constantinople might become if in the hands of Europeans, one has only to compare it with Alexandria or with Cairo. What a contrast ! Properly to appreciate the difference one must study separately each detail in the organisation of the two countries. One must inspect the quays, custom-house, docks and railways at

Alexandria, and at Cairo, examine the methods of telegraph and postal service, see the telephones, the lighting, drainage and system of street cleaning, and mark the orderly dress and bearing of the soldiers and policemen. The parallel is eminently disadvantageous to Turkey. Yet both countries are Mussulman. Egypt, however, is the East that goes forward with the march of Western civilisation. Turkey is the East that goes backward, that stands still. The latter is like China ; the former like Japan ; and yet the inhabitants of the vice kingdom of the Nile are far from being a nation perfect at all points ; financial disorder there is most lamentable ; and officials are not all of them above a bribe. But Egypt has striven to copy the good and valuable institutions of Europe ; Turkey rejects them as much as she can. By a strange irony of fate it is the Empire of the Pharaohs that has to pay over to the Ottoman government a tribute of eight millions of francs. The civilized country is the vassal of the barbarous nation.

No sooner has he reached his hotel and has been installed in his apartment than the traveller eagerly sets out to climb up Galata Tower which serves watchers on the lookout for outbreaks of fire in the capital. Once at this height, the charm begins to work anew and one gazes down with untiring delight upon the huge city. Now is the moment to say a word about the way in which Constantinople is divided and to specify these divisions.

Briefly there are three main parts of the town : the Turkish part at Stamboul, the European quarter at Galata and Pera, and the holy quarter at Scutari. It is something to know this much ; but that is not enough, for the ethnography of the capital is far more complicated.

Thus, at Stamboul there is the vast Greek quarter of Phanar, famed for the distinguished men born there ; beside it lies Balata, a district inhabited by the Caraït Jews. There is another Greek quarter near Baloukli, a monastery renowned for its little fish, half-red half-black ; another at Psamatia, and an Armenian quarter at Coum-Capou. Similarly, at Galata it is the Greek community that is in the ascendant ; but in this quarter the confusion of nationalities is even more bewildering ; while further on, at Top Hané, near the Arsenal, the Turks are in a majority. In Pera also there is a rich Armenian quarter at Taxim, and a Turkish one at Djhanguir Mahallesi. The valley below Pera is lived in by paupers of all nations. This forbidding, foul-smelling dale, divided by a large open drain, is called Kassim Pasha. A faubourg of Talmudist Jews with a vast cemetery stretches away beyond, and closes this side of the town.

From all this it is plain that the cosmopolitism of Constantinople is extremely confused. To sum up : the city is half Turkish, half Greek. Turks only form half the population of Constantinople. Greeks and Armenians make up most of the other half, their majority being reinforced by Jews and Europeans. The main elements are Turkish and Greek ; round these are grouped detachments of all possible nationalities, some coming from Asia and sent thither from Europe. All this heterogeneous mass lives as it has lived for centuries, without ever having become fused or melted into one. It is not a nation, not a society, but a jumble of colonies, in juxtaposition the one to the other, divided by insurmountable barriers of customs, of language and of ideas. More than this : each community

professes to defy and disdain the others ; and all mutually try to exploit one another as much as may be. The Armenian speaks scornfully of the dishonesty of the Greek ; the Greek again scorns the servility of the Armenian who willingly courts and truckles to the Mussulman ; while both shrug shoulders when talking of the Turk, who however gives them as good as he gets, never losing an inch of that serio-comic majesty under which he cloaks his laziness and ignorance. The Levantine by reason of his European descent thinks himself vastly superior to all. As for the Jew, he is put at the bottom rung of the social ladder ; in this hierarchy he hardly passes the level of the boot-black.

Constantinople is a city of mutual disdain. The hand of every man is against his neighbour. Each person treats his fellow as an enemy, or rather as a debtor. The Turk never scruples to refuse to pay his debts to the European ; the Armenian exploits the Turk, the Greek, and if need be, the Armenian ; the Greek fleeces every one he comes near ; the European does his best to keep up with such past masters in the art of swindling, while the Jew with his dirty finger eagerly seeks to scrape up a piastre or two here and there, regardless of buffets and snubbing.

To this centre of fraudulent traffic each nationality brings its contingent of vice and dishonesty. Yet one may always affirm that if the ignorance and sloth have been imported from Asia, the vanity and demoralisation have come from Europe.

Despite such race hatreds and rivalry of appetites, all these herds pasture together in peace by a sort of tacit compromise. Moreover, in Constantinople the matters which most irritate men do not exist. There are neither

discussions as to political preponderance nor contests for the triumph of certain social ideas. Political passions can but be fomented under an absolute and theocratic government ; social ideas imply a feeling for human solidarity. All that in the East is as *volapück*. Everybody is only busied about getting rich ; each man's brains are like a little money-box into which abstract truths by reason of their greatness can never enter.

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Provided he neither attack the Sultan nor religion, a man may do pretty much as he likes ; but there is this drawback, that all evil-minded lucre lovers and thievish debtors have every sort of facility to practise their villainy. For a nation this is a situation of great peril, and, in a way, a return to barbarism. What kind of people is that which works exclusively for itself, which seeks to live at the expense of others, and above all, at the expense of the social organism ? To rob and plunder the Turkish Government : what a rare advantage is this ! What matter for laughter are the many scurvy tricks played upon it by the most knowing !

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Alexandria, and at Cairo, examine the methods of telegraph and postal service, see the telephones, the lighting, drainage and system of street cleaning, and mark the orderly dress and bearing of the soldiers and policemen. The parallel is eminently disadvantageous to Turkey. Yet both countries are Mussulman. Egypt, however, is the East that goes forward with the march of Western civilisation. Turkey is the East that goes backward, that stands still. The latter is like China ; the former like Japan ; and yet the inhabitants of the vice kingdom of the Nile are far from being a nation perfect at all points ; financial disorder there is most lamentable ; and officials are not all of them above a bribe. But Egypt has striven to copy the good and valuable institutions of Europe ; Turkey rejects them as much as she can. By a strange irony of fate it is the Empire of the Pharaohs that has to pay over to the Ottoman government a tribute of eight millions of francs. The civilized country is the vassal of the barbarous nation.

No sooner has he reached his hotel and has been installed in his apartment than the traveller eagerly sets out to climb up Galata Tower which serves watchers on the lookout for outbreaks of fire in the capital. Once at this height, the charm begins to work anew and one gazes down with untiring delight upon the huge city. Now is the moment to say a word about the way in which Constantinople is divided and to specify these divisions.

Briefly there are three main parts of the town : the Turkish part at Stamboul, the European quarter at Galata and Pera, and the holy quarter at Scutari. It is something to know this much ; but that is not enough, for the ethnography of the capital is far more complicated.

Thus, at Stamboul there is the vast Greek quarter of Phanar, famed for the distinguished men born there; beside it lies Balata, a district inhabited by the Caraït Jews. There is another Greek quarter near Baloukli, a monastery renowned for its little fish, half-red half-black; another at Psamatia, and an Armenian quarter at Coum-Capou. Similarly, at Galata it is the Greek community that is in the ascendant; but in this quarter the confusion of nationalities is even more bewildering; while further on, at Top Hané, near the Arsenal, the Turks are in a majority. In Pera also there is a rich Armenian quarter at Taxim, and a Turkish one at Djhanguir Mahallesi. The valley below Pera is lived in by paupers of all nations. This forbidding, foul-smelling dale, divided by a large open drain, is called Kassim Pasha. A faubourg of Talmudist Jews with a vast cemetery stretches away beyond, and closes this side of the town.

From all this it is plain that the cosmopolitism of Constantinople is extremely confused. To sum up: the city is half Turkish, half Greek. Turks only form half the population of Constantinople. Greeks and Armenians make up most of the other half, their majority being reinforced by Jews and Europeans. The main elements are Turkish and Greek; round these are grouped detachments of all possible nationalities, some coming from Asia and sent thither from Europe. All this heterogeneous mass lives as it has lived for centuries, without ever having become fused or melted into one. It is not a nation, not a society, but a jumble of colonies, in juxtaposition the one to the other, divided by insurmountable barriers of customs, of language and of ideas. More than this: each community

professes to defy and disdain the others ; and all mutually try to exploit one another as much as may be. The Armenian speaks scornfully of the dishonesty of the Greek ; the Greek again scorns the servility of the Armenian who willingly courts and truckles to the Mussulman ; while both shrug shoulders when talking of the Turk, who however gives them as good as he gets, never losing an inch of that serio-comic majesty under which he cloaks his laziness and ignorance. The Levantine by reason of his European descent thinks himself vastly superior to all. As for the Jew, he is put at the bottom rung of the social ladder ; in this hierarchy he hardly passes the level of the boot-black.

Constantinople is a city of mutual disdain. The hand of every man is against his neighbour. Each person treats his fellow as an enemy, or rather as a debtor. The Turk never scruples to refuse to pay his debts to the European ; the Armenian exploits the Turk, the Greek, and if need be, the Armenian ; the Greek fleeces every one he comes near ; the European does his best to keep up with such past masters in the art of swindling, while the Jew with his dirty finger eagerly seeks to scrape up a piastre or two here and there, regardless of buffets and snubbing.

To this centre of fraudulent traffic each nationality brings its contingent of vice and dishonesty. Yet one may always affirm that if the ignorance and sloth have been imported from Asia, the vanity and demoralisation have come from Europe.

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and a strange invincible difficulty of comprehension. Seeing that for a long while he had been in the army, the post was assigned to him of Minister of Agriculture and Commerce.

Now another governor passes. When formerly minister of finance, it was he who had to treat with the railway company constructing the line joining the Constantinople-Adrianople-Philippopoli route with that of Sofia-Belgrade-Vienna. Like a prudent man, he drew up two *Cahiers de charge*, one in conformity with the intentions of the Turkish Government, and the other which entirely met the views of the Company in question. Of course this Robert Houdin submitted for ratification to the Sublime Porte the first of these two contracts. As soon as the final text had been adopted by the Government, hi! presto! with his magic wand he transformed this *Cahier de charge* into the other one; and for this conjuring feat he received from the Company the modest fee of forty thousand Turkish pounds. True, the Turkish Government later refused to ratify the contract, but in order to punish this untrustworthy negotiator he was appointed governor of an important province.

That elegant Circassian with a row of gold cartridge-cases on his breast that rides proudly past on a superb horse, strangled once with his own hand two poor young girls. Their family were for bringing the murderer to justice by having recourse to law; but the Turkish Government like to flatter and keep in with the Tcherkesses, for it is they who furnish the Pasha's harems with the most beautiful maidens, and they who put their ferocity at the service of the great. All hope of obtaining justice had thus to be abandoned; the assassin is at large, and has resumed his former functions.

Yon fat Bulgarian going by can neither read nor write. He is in all respects a savage. But he had the skill to collect a small fortune with which he bought the goodwill of certain Pashas at the War Office. And they nominated him to the post of sheep-purchaser to the Imperial army. By dint of adroit bargaining he has become a millionaire. To-day, he has a palace at Stamboul and villas everywhere. In his lecherous dreams he sees the forms of adorable women. At once he sends for his painter and bids him execute portraits that must in all points faithfully answer to his description. When after repeated correction, these pictures approach the ideal of which the Pasha dreamed, Circassian panders of the most practised sort are despatched to the Caucasus and to the shores of the Caspian Sea to bring back for their lord the type of loveliness revealed to him in sleep. Quite like a fairy-tale, is it not? When this droll collector of girls goes by, every one bows; and he receives salutes from those poor soldiers whom, to enrich himself, he allowed to starve.

That Effendi in long black coat, cut Turkish fashion, without collar or facings, was employed at the Ministry of Finance. But he overdid his part as pilferer when the last loan was negotiated; and the Government, losing patience, was forced to prosecute him. Happily he managed to bribe his judges, and so lives now tranquilly on the handsome estate which by theft he was able to buy.

That young namby-pamby with shifting, unsteady gaze and loose lip is a species of Oriental parasite. He sings, and plays the guitar; he is much in request among great personages for his artistic and other talents. For the moment he is kept by an officer high up in the service,

whose shameful vices have their recompense in a terrible affection of the spinal marrow. And this minion is now on the look-out for another amateur of his charms. His trances are just those of any trull who has lost her keeper and hopes to find some reliable customer.

That big European, wearing the large rosette of the Medjidieh, is a spy in the pay of the Imperial Palace. His bluff manner and boisterous good humour are his passport to all social gatherings. One is surprised to meet him everywhere, and one asks by what door he got in and by what window he will go out. On seeing him, everybody suddenly talks in a whisper; and yet people accept the hand he holds out to all. Although he talks a great deal himself, one ear is always open to catch anything said behind his back. He is obliging; he will cut out paper figures to please the young folk, and is as zealous a match-maker as any mamma with seven unmarried daughters.

There, in that victoria, goes an influential personage; he is the Sultan's head physician. He married a prostitute whose favours every Perote could buy for ten francs. Despite her sudden exaltation to rank, this Messalina has not retired from her profession, but uses the impotence and the money of her old husband to house and enrich her young lovers.

I assure you that, philosophising thus during a brief stroll across the Bridge, one feels infinite consolation and refreshment when one looks at the honest faces of the street-dogs, forgetful of their manginess and revolting sores. At least, if you stretch out your hand to them, they will eagerly requite your caress with affection that is neither feigned nor false.

CHAPTER II.

ISLAMISM.—POLYGAMY ; DIVORCE ; REPUDIATION.—WHAT A WIFE COSTS IN TURKEY.—FANATICISM.—A DAY AND A NIGHT DURING THE GREAT FAST.—COGNAC AND CONSCIENCE.

WHEN discussing the decadence of Oriental nations it is customary to shrug one's shoulders and ascribe the evil to Islamism. "All that is Mahommed's fault." The solution has the advantage of being extremely simple ; then, again, it flatters Christian self-respect, and they can so revenge themselves for the epithet of "dogs" which the Mussulman so liberally and so freely bestows upon them.

Yet, to us, this idea seems wholly superficial and consequently inexact. Islamism, to our mind, is no more hostile to civilisation than any other religion. Although we do not intend to start any theological discussion which might at once make our readers ready to skip, it is yet necessary to say a word or two about Islamism, for it was Islamism which created that strange reality we call the East. Without Islamism, the East would only be a cardinal point. The sun on rising would meet the same men and the same

things that it saw when setting; and for this meritorious star that would surely be most monotonous. It is Islamism which approved and consecrated the law of polygamy, the characteristic trait in Asiatic morals. It is Islamism that gave us the minaret, the main distinguishing feature of Oriental architecture.

According to Mussulman ideas, religion sums up and contains all; politics, justice and learning. The enemies of Turkey are always styled "unbelievers"; a war is always "a holy war"; the soldiery fight under the green standard of the Prophet; the Sultan is at once sovereign and pontiff, Padishah and Caliph.

The priests or *ulemas* do not form, as with the Christians, a caste of sacred character. They are theologians, men of learning. *Ulema* is the plural for *alym*, learned, derived from *ylm*, science. They are also judges (*cadis*) or teachers (*hodjas*). The sacred writings or *cheriat* form the basis of all legislation; only in proportion as the relations with the West have grown more extensive, certain laws have been added to these sacred documents that are just taken from the French code. So to remark upon these is needless; we will only stay to note certain special points in Mussulman law.

Assuredly the most disastrous of these institutions is the law of *vakouf* or of foundations. By virtue of this law, when a man dies childless, his property reverts to the mosques. These mosques are in possession to-day of lands the estimated extent of which, though varying, may be considered as one third of the Empire. Thus the mortmain property exempt from taxation covers a very large part of the dominions of the Sultan. It will easily be seen how

disastrous is such a system to the treasury revenues and to the agricultural prosperity of the country.

These huge estates, made thus useless to commerce, serve only to foster the sloth of a goodly portion of the Ottoman nation. For the *personnel* of the mosques is numberless. There are some that have several hundreds of *sheiks* (doctors) *khatifs*, *imams*, *muezzins*, without counting the *mollahs* who reside at the religious seminaries (*medresseh*) or the families of all these priests, doctors and professors with their servants and their slaves. All these persons only consume without producing anything. This is important to note ; for this defines the fundamental vice of Ottoman society.

The Turk practises no trade, engages in no commerce. There is a proverb which says. "The Frank has science, the Armenian, commerce ; the Osmanli, majesty." Thus, the Turk is majestic ; and, for him, that is enough ; only unfortunately in our matter-of-fact day, majesty is not a means of existence.

The Turk leaves all trade to folk that in his eyes belong to an inferior race. He declines to be either a hatter or a tailor or a bootmaker, a grocer or a carpenter. Only four professions does he deign to recognise as fit for him, viz., those of government official, soldier, priest or agriculturist.

The word "agriculturist" must not deceive us ; let there be no illusion about it. We shall see further on that the Turkish cultivator, finding that the Government taxes and imposts deprive him of all chance of profit, has adopted for some time past the system of producing only just sufficient for his own personal consumption. If by any chance there should be a small surplus of grain, he buries

it all against next year. So in this way he contributes very little towards providing for the general consumption ; and Turkey has to buy her wheat and flour from Hungary and from Russia. But first and foremost, the Turk is a functionary ; to be that is his life's dream. He knows well enough that he will be badly paid ; and paid at rare intervals, too. In fact, in each year he expects to lose a third of his salary. No matter ; his one desire is to get an official appointment, for that flatters his vanity and suits his sloth. If the Turk as agriculturist produces little, the Turk as functionary produces absolutely nothing. On the contrary, he lives at the expense of the State.

So with the Turkish soldier. He ranks as a destroyer of budgets. The priest, again, gets his living by the law of *vakouf*, and produces as little as do the other three. In all cases, therefore, the Turk is always the consumer—never the producer. He must get his living at the expense of the Government taxes. Who then pays those taxes ? The Greeks, the Armenians and the other lesser nationalities in whose hands are the commerce, industry and agriculture of the country. To put the whole thing into a nutshell ; it is the Christian who maintains the Mussulman. The Turk, plunged in his dreamy *kief*, watches the others work :—

“ Ah ! qu'il est doux de ne rien faire
Quand tout s'agite autour de nous ! ”

In his eyes, work is a misfortune, a punishment, a sign of inferiority. Therefore he has a deep disdain for the activity of the Christians ; he is even opposed to it ; and when he perceives that it is suddenly developing, he doggedly thwarts it. “ Do nothing yourself, nor ever let others do aught either,” might be taken as the traditional motto of

Turkey. Hence all these vexing petty intrigues, all these administrative absurdities and iniquities, which finally disgust the most energetic and persevering persons who come to the East to carry through some enterprise. Travel through the country and wherever you go you will see empty factories, deserted farms, and unworked mines. On all sides, ruin and disorder—a veritable land of the disheartened. Ask the natives and they will answer: “There, a Frenchman, or an Italian or a German set up, and started this or that commercial enterprise. After some years of perpetual hindrance, he gave up in despair; he was forced to quit a country in which the Government’s sole aim is to stifle and thwart all private enterprise.”

Let us go back to the subject of *vakouf*. That sovereign who should have sufficient energy to abolish this institution would render immense service to the country. Yet how can one suppose that the Head of Religion would ever dispossess that Religion, and so raise up against himself all the hatred and bitterness of so powerful and vindictive a body as that of the *ulemas*? Even in the last war, the *mollahs* showed signs of rebellion. To bring them under, it needed a most terrible system of repression. Every night a certain number of the guilty were secretly put into boats and, bound hand and foot, were flung into the sea. The Bosphorus next morning threw up their corpses on the beach, so revealing to the terror-stricken population the mysteries of expeditionary justice. In Turkey, fanaticism cannot be trifled with. *Vakouf* will live as long as Islamism endures.

Another legal eccentricity may here be noted, viz., the permission to reclaim through a third party without

indemnity the possession of an object or of property which originally belonged to the claimant. This liberty is of course grossly abused. In Turkey false witnesses are a drug in the market; you can buy them like melons or gourds, and there is a lively competition among them. Nothing is easier than to procure an obliging witness at a modest rate, and this facility becomes greater when the person to be fleeced is a foreigner. Thus on the simple assertion of one of these hired witnesses a Turk can get hold of any object that he desires. The system of obtaining money by pledges becomes impossible, for the debtor may take it into his head not to refund the sum borrowed or to redeem his pledge. Usurers mutually profit by this situation to impose the hardest of conditions upon needy wretches; there are bogus sales, and interests of one and two per cent. paid weekly. In no country perhaps have the usurer's tricks reached such a pitch of perfection. We will not now dwell further upon the subject of Ottoman law, for it is one to which we shall repeatedly have occasion to return. Need it be added that venality among judges thrives and flourishes, and that the chances of the success of a lawsuit are measured by the plaintiff's fortune! Besides venality, there is abject, limitless servility. It is well nigh hopeless to try and contend with a high functionary; if that functionary be attached to the Palace, one is condemned without a hearing. And in most of these cases, consular agents and European lawyers do wisely when they advise their compatriots to bear things patiently and hold their peace.

So much, then, for the judicial attributes of the *ulemas*; and there is little to be said regarding public instruction.

For, despite the efforts made by Government, all is still in its infancy. At Constantinople, besides the great Franco-Turkish college of Galata-Seraï, there are a few fairly good Turkish schools of the elementary sort. In some of the larger towns of the Empire others have been founded ; all that they need are pupils to learn, and masters to teach. These establishments have been started less with a view to the spread of education than as a take-in, a sham to deceive the eye. In the villages, again, all that a *hodja* has to do is to recite or rather to chant to the peasant children the opening verses of the Coran. This psalmody is always accompanied by rhythmical swaying of the body, usually associated with porcelain china figures on a mantelpiece ; such oscillatory movement would seem to be indispensable to Orientals, in order properly to digest the matter which they teach and are taught. The Turkish language, grand, melodious as it is to the ear, has this draw-back that it is so difficult to read and write as to be almost inaccessible to the mass. To know it even fairly, one must have studied Persian and Arabic. Hence it comes that the lower classes are doomed to hopeless ignorance ; while to most foreigners the written language is wholly incomprehensible.

In Japan, a system has lately been adopted by which the national language is transcribed in European characters. This might be done as regards Turkish, also ; and a uniform method of transcription of this sort would wonderfully facilitate relations between the East and the West. The Armenians have already realised this idea, for in Stamboul several newspapers are published, that are written in Turkish but printed in Armenian character. The main point would consist in the choice of a uniform method of transcription :

as a matter of fact, each grammarian has his own. Let us take for instance the word *beuyuk*, great. It will be found spelt in five different ways: *bouyouk*, *bouyuk*, *buzyuk*, *beuyekuk*. There is no doubt that this innovation would raise a regular tempest of opposition in the world of ulemas; they are ever fearful lest the Holy Books should be translated; in fact, Europeans are now forbidden to take out of Turkey a copy of the Coran.

All that we have just said about laws, only applies to Mussulman civil and public life. Let us now climb over the wall of private life, a wall decorated at its ridge by bits of broken bottles, and let us look closer at the organisation of a Turkish family. In other terms, we will speak of polygamy, an institution, which for unfaithful husbands in the West is a cause for merriment and contempt. But if the matter be coldly considered, there is no real reason why polygamy should be cited as the main cause for the decay of Oriental society. Polygamy, in principle at least, is not a concession made to man's libertinism; it is another conception of family life, that is all. True, it maintains the wife in a state of civil and social inferiority; but from a private point of view, the wife is mistress in her own home. Just as in the West, she is the mother of the family in every sense of the word.

Thus one must give up those burlesque ideas which still exist in Europe as to life in the *harems*, which French people with ludicrous persistency still call *serais* (palaces). On the banks of the Seine or the Thames when a Turkish family is spoken of, one imagines a fierce, turbaned Pasha, wrapped in loose, gold-embroidered robe, armed with a scimitar and smoking a *narghilé*, while his wives, half-

veiled in gauze garments, recline around him on rich carpets in every voluptuous posture of temptation and allurements. He is imagined as a sort of Laocoon, not girt about with serpents, but with the warm bodies and caressing limbs of Odalisques ; in a word for Frenchmen, the Turk is a man who can always afford himself the expensive luxury of a vast lupanar.

Polygamy is quite another thing ; these little amusements are wholly contradictory to Mussulman law. By that law, the husband is obliged to provide each of his wives with a separate apartment where she may live with her children and servants ; and each wife, no matter what may be her age, her religion, or her nationality, is entitled to the same treatment. The Coran in delicate fashion has gone so far as to ensure for all wives a certain equality in marital privileges, and it imposes upon husbands certain obligations that may not unfrequently be difficult to fulfil. Thursday night is the night set apart for the first wife ; the husband must then do his best to give her a proof of his conjugal fidelity ; this weekly passion is almost obligatory. In all this, however, there is something evidently matter-of-fact and humdrum ; here there are no voluptuous orgies, no outbursts of unbridled sensuality. A Turkish family consists of a series of separate families headed by one husband.

From this system it is plain that the husband draws the most advantage. "With you," said a Turk to me once, "it often happens that your wife is in a bad humour or out of sorts ; with us, we are always sure to find one of our wives ready to give us a charming welcome." And another added : "The European wife, soon gives up being amiable

to her husband ; the Mussulman wife, on the contrary, is always watching how she can captivate her husband, for she is ever afraid of her rivals, and strives by all means in her power to have influence over him, and so ensure for her children a prosperous future."

Moreover, let us not forget that the Turk, the real bonafide Turk, who, by living in Constantinople has not been corrupted, is essentially a family man. He is ignorant of other pleasures than those of his own home. He never goes to club, to theatre, or to concert ; no amusements appeal to him, for the simple reason that few or none exist. Married when quite young, at sixteen or seventeen, the Turk conceives no pleasure, no happiness greater than that of having many children. How far removed are we, then, from the seductive odalisques whose pictures, in the East, are only to be seen on biscuit-tins !

What we have just said relates to Turkish home life as it was once, and as it still is, in the provinces. Needless to say, that in Constantinople such patriarchal traditions have speedily been altered ! Polygamy has there become a sort of means to keep up the sinking flame of lust and perpetually to stimulate the sensual faculties ; without doubt this ceaseless over-excitement has greatly helped to bring about the decay of the race and to sap its energy and force. Look at the Constantinople Turk ; he is no longer the conquering hero of a bygone day, tall, brawny, robust, with whom the Frankish proverb originated—"as strong as a Turk." He is a sort of little, weedy voluptuary, lean, shrivelled, doubled-up ; a prey to consumption and to venereal disease.

As a logical consequence, polygamy when thus understood

and practised could not fail to destroy itself ; and this is what in fact has happened. So soon as polygamy has no other end and aim than to create a large family with several branches, and one husband as the trunk of the tree, it can only be a means for ceaselessly supplying a man with new wives ; it is domestic debauchery. It is far simpler as well as far cheaper to renounce polygamy and to have recourse to repudiation according to the easy simplified fashion of the Mussulman law. "Why," said a Turk naïvely to me one day, "why, when my wife no longer does what I want should I be forced to live with her?" In fact, polygamy is becoming every day more rare ; and this for several reasons.

First of all, despite his affected disdain for Western civilisation, the Osmanli does his best to copy as closely as possible Parisian manners and customs. Nowadays it is considered very *chic* (the Turks have got hold of the word) to have only one wife. Polygamy has gone out of fashion.

Then in the second place, since private and public business is in so disastrous a state, the Turk, even if rich, cannot meet the expenses which the separate maintenance of several wives entails. Each wife must have a special set of apartments and at least four or five servants. The cost is too great a one for a Turk ; he prefers to have several wives, but in succession ; and economy thus makes him a monogamist.

Finally, the influence of the wife has to be taken into account. In proportion as the young Turkish females become less ignorant, they can the better appreciate the value of the position acquired by their sex in the West ; and they can then fight with all their force against an institution that for them is at once prejudicial and humiliating.

Immediately upon her betrothal a girl of good family exacts from her future husband the promise never to take a second wife ; and on a betrothal night such a promise costs little, especially in Turkey. What most threatens the happiness of the young wife is the putting-away, not polygamy ; and we must avow that the former is far more immoral than the latter. Thus, as polygamy decreases, morality becomes looser, and family-ties more slack. Cases of abortion have now become formidably frequent ; the fact that a Turkish wife is in a way exempt from the penalties of Ottoman law only serves to favour such a crime.

The formalities of marriage and divorce are in themselves simple enough. Before the wedding ceremony, the amount of the bride's dowry is fixed and that of her indemnity, in case she be put away. In villages, poor girls often get this indemnity paid in advance, fearing that on the fatal day they may not have any money left and be abandoned without resources whatever. The bride's trousseau consists of her own linen, with a chemise and a veil, the bridegroom having to supply her with a *feradjî* or outdoor cloak, a mirror, soap and napkins. Such are the main elements of the *corbeille de mariage* that with the rich are extremely costly. The newly-married pair receive the nuptial blessing from the *iman* ; and then the girl, covered by her bridal veil, is led into the bridal chamber, and here she and her husband repeat a special prayer, after which he may strip off the veil and contemplate at will the charms of her who hitherto had been half hidden from his gaze. Is there not much charm and freshness in so simple a ceremony as this ? Surely it is preferable to the bustle, humbug and grimacing which always accompany weddings in civilised countries.

So much for the good side of Turkish married life ; now let us look at the reverse. To put away his wife, the Turk pays her the sum agreed upon, and then from the *imam* he gets a square piece of paper having thereon the religious formula authorising the dissolution of the marriage. It is then that the husband may make use of the consecrated phrase : *Avretim bosh ola*, "Let my wife be free !" It is only the husband who can ask for a divorce, and the claim may be mutual for the following motives : joint consent, insufficiency of money given for the wife's maintenance, voluntary absence of the husband, his apostacy or his impotence. This law of divorce which obliges the husband to pay the dowry money, is thus an effective weapon in the hands of young wives of wealthy family.

By a ridiculous clause in the law, when a husband desires to take back his divorced wife, she is bound first to wed another man, if only for one night. Blind men are usually chosen for this agreeable office ; so poor Belisariuses in the East have now and again their little compensations. Besides his four legitimate wives, the Turk may have slaves if he likes, but he is obliged to marry any one of these who bears him a child. Officially speaking, there is no longer any traffic in white flesh ; and the slave bazaars have been solemnly closed. But this is a trade that thrives none the less. All about the Top Hané arsenal there are *hans* kept by Circassians where pretty girls are for sale. A young girl costs from 2500 francs to 3000 francs, but the price of course goes as high as 10,000 francs and more. The Circassian girls themselves are glad enough to get into such establishments ; they prefer the easy life of a Turkish harem to the dull miserable existence of their compatriots. In

these slave-shops they can recover from the fatigues of their journey, and acquire that degree of plump sleekness which Orientals affect. So they go through a moderate course of feeding up. Custom exacts that every year during the festival of Bairam, the Queen mother should offer a beautiful slave to the Sultan. This example is followed by other exalted personages. The Caliph Abdul Aziz had thus as many as 1200 women in his harem.

The Circassians who do the recruiting work for these Ottoman girl-shops are base, blood-thirsty villains, dreaded and detested by all the people ; but for all that they swagger about the town with *khandjar* at side and pistols at belt, proud of the protection given them by nympholeptic pashas and other epicures in dainty female flesh. When reaching Turkey, the sight of tramways and lamp-posts makes one think that civilisation and progress have there got a hold. But scratch the Turk in his fez and overcoat, and you will find the Turk in turban and caftan ; he is not civilised ; he only pretends to be so ; he has only exchanged his pristine rudeness for a seeming softness of manner.

What we have just said for polygamy we may repeat for fanaticism, with which the Turk is so bitterly reproached. But fanaticism has no whit helped towards the dissolution of Oriental morality ; on the contrary, this sentiment is a force for a nation, above all for a theocratic nation. It is fanaticism which has made Turks and Arabs great. In the believer who willingly deprives himself of all ; who bears cold, hunger and fatigue without a murmur ; who rushes forth to combat like a martyr and dies like a hero—in him we have the most perfect type of the soldier who makes empires great and strong. In a State where religion and

country are solid and immutable, fanaticism is the purest expression of sincere patriotism.

Let us add that Turkish fanaticism, the hatred cherished by believers in the Coran for all other religions is perfectly logical. We in no wise mean to make an apology for Islam, but we can well understand why the Mussulman believes himself superior to all other men. What is the religion of Mahommed if not an exalted form of Deism based on the conception of one Almighty and Eternal God, on the doctrine of punishment and recompense in the life to come, on equality, brotherly kindness, the protection of the weak and the respect of laws? It is a religion that admits neither of dogmas, symbols nor mysteries, and, as regards superstition, it is far behind the greater portion of Christian sects. Thus the Turk naturally deems his religion a far loftier, purer one than any other, because it is less material. He is used to the clear, simple conception of one God and one Divine law interpreted by inspired men. How can his mind accept so complicated a dogma as that of the Trinity, which forms the basis of all Christian religions? What is he to think of the mysterious doctrines of the Eucharist or of the worship of certain miracle-working statues and shrines? To him, this is but idolatry in its grossest form. So it comes that all efforts on the part of Christians to convert Mussulmans have been fruitless. But, on the other hand, Islamism makes numerous proselytes, chiefly in Africa, where it soon replaces the religion of the locality. Turkey's depression and enervation can thus never be attributed to the doctrine of Mahommed. It comes from the manners and the temperament of the Osmanlis, from their sloth and ignorance. It is the fatal consequence of having

substituted a soft, sensual existence for the stirring life of battle and conquest led by their ancestors.

Fatalism has largely helped to produce this enervation, albeit such a doctrine is nowhere to be found in the Coran. And does not the Gospel contain like teaching when we hear that the lilies of the field, who toil not, neither spin, are watched over and protected by that Almighty God whose guardianship is the same and more for man than his care for the birds of the air? The theory of the Mussulman Holy Book is no other than this, but the Turks have known how to make it fit with their idleness and indolence. "So God will; *insh allah!*" is what they ejaculate on every occasion; and thus they avoid the trouble of making the slightest effort. If things go wrong and they fail, they say, "Thus was it written;" and thus they save themselves the unpleasantness of making mutual reproaches. But as the good God never took the pains to find them in clothes, in boots, in sugar, or other necessities, the Turks had to buy these things in Europe without ever trying to produce them themselves. To such a pitch had this come, that Turkey possessed tributary states, working for her and supplying her with pocket-money; in a word, she was a nation kept by her neighbours. But these neighbours have to-day recovered their freedom and shut their purse, so that, like the grasshopper in the fable, the Turk finds himself in a great fix. He has no money; and he knows that he is in capable of earning any.

Religious sentiment, like all other sentiments, has become much weaker in the Turkish capital. The great fast of Ramazan, when every believer ought to abstain from drinking, eating or smoking during the whole day from

sunrise to sunset, is no longer strictly observed, except among the poor classes. It has become a pretext for carnival orgies which are kept up throughout the night until the dawn. During the day, if one abstain from anything, it is from work; the Turk sleeps all day because he has been gormandising all night. During the month of Ramazan, administrative life in Turkey is at a stand-still; the public offices are opened at most for an hour or so daily, and the officials never come there; the rickety machine suddenly stops altogether; there is no such thing as urgency, but all important affairs are put off until after Baïram, a four-days' festival that succeeds Ramazan.

As much might be said for the non-observance of the Coran's law forbidding the use of spirituous liquors. Turks publicly drink mastic, the absinthe of the Levantine, and some can manage to absorb ten or twelve glasses a day. Wine is also served at their tables, but they have a special liking for cognac. To soothe their conscience they call it a medicine which has to be taken for their health's sake and their often infirmities. Many wine shops in Stamboul gravely have the word "Pharmacy" put up in big letters over the door. The window front is filled with Martell's Three Star Brandy, (sham stuff, all of it) imitations of fine champagne, and base, sweet, fiery mixtures that pass with the unsuspecting for curaçoa and chartreuse. Poor deluded Turks! They style such vile concoctions "remedies," and believe in their efficacy! At some of these so-called "pharmacies" one can buy nothing in the way of drugs—not even a packet of bicarbonate of soda or a pennyworth of sulphate of magnesia. The other day I met a functionary just about to empty a huge tumbler of brandy, because,

as he said, he had scratched his finger when getting out of a caique. I surprised him not a little by affirming that cognac was a remedy only of service for external use.

Even devotees delight to sacrifice to Bacchus with wine and spirits, when they only get the chance. I well recollect the copious libations of wine, beer and kirsch offered to me once, by an amiable dervish; and that in mid Ramazan. This bout had its sequel when the *imam* of a certain mosque astonished us by the prodigious quantity of champagne that his snowy turbaned head could stand. Till then, we had no idea of the faculty for absorption possessed by an *imam*. The poor fellows, though, are far from being over-rich, and one cannot blame them for profiting by any chance to play the glutton and make a little money. If they could, they would willingly sell the pillars of the mosques, the holy carpets and the gorgeously embroidered tapestries that deck their sacred buildings. In fact, this is done again and again. At St Sophia, the *imams* worry every tourist who comes there to make them buy little cubes of mosaic that have been knocked out or that have fallen from the roof. Much the same thing is done at St Mark's, Venice, only not by priests, but by rapacious guides. The credulous delight to hear that these bits of mosaic come from two indisputable sources. Some are found in the sand at Phener Baghtché, where was once a Pagan temple. Others fall from the vaulted roofs, and are carefully collected and preserved. We should be only too glad to believe both these versions, only let us confess that after no little exploration we were unable to discover a single hodja at Phener Baghtché groping in the sand for the relics of a Pagan temple. And on the other hand, if little cubes of mosaic fall from the

vaulted roof of San Sophia, this is only natural and interesting. How else would the herd of tourists be provided with portable souvenirs? In one little mosque that I visited, the *hodja* actually insisted on my buying the entire mosaic covering one of its cupolas. At Adrianople and other towns, tourists have been able to buy the choice plaques of *faience* decorating the walls of the mosques. All the houses of European residents at Constantinople are full of such curiosities, which once upon a time were to be got for a few paras. But prices have gone up, and for this the English are to blame who in their passion for bric-a-brac pay cash down, without ever troubling to bargain. A philosophical Turk said to me once, when I remonstrated with him as to the commercial attitude of a *hodja* attached to one of the mosques: "What's to be done? The poor wretch only earns two pounds (or 46 francs) a month; and he has got two wives!"

Did not one of the late Sultans condemn to destruction the magnificent walls of Constantinople, one of the wonders of the East? What end had he in view? It was because, through the sale of the materials, he hoped to realise a sum of a hundred thousand francs to be spent in buying a present for the Queen mother. It needed most energetic intervention on the part of the British Embassy to prevent this act of vandalism. Yes; we must verily affirm that the art treasures of ancient Byzantium are in safe and sacred keeping!

After this archeological sigh, let us conclude by repeating that, if the Mahommedans are in a ripe stage of decay, the fault cannot be set down to Mahommed.

CHAPTER III.

THE TURKISH PEASANT.—HOW THE AUTHORITIES PROTECT
THE CULTIVATOR.—IS AGRICULTURE IN A FAIR WAY
TO SUCCESS?—HOW BRIGANDAGE THRIVES IN TURKEY.—
ABSENCE OF MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

“THE Turk whom the use of power has not corrupted, whom oppression has not debased, is certainly one of those men who please most by a happy blending of good qualities. Never does he cheat you ; honest and upright, he is true as steel to his own folk ; extremely hospitable ; respectful yet never servile, discreet, tolerant, benevolent ; and very kind to animals.” Such is the judgment passed upon the Osmanli by Elisée Reclus, the great geographer ; and it were impossible to have said anything better or truer ; his opinion agrees, moreover, in every respect with that of those travellers who have made a close study of the East.

To find this Turk, however, whom “the use of power has not corrupted,” one must look for him in the heart of the provinces,—never in the great towns. It is to him that this praise applies ; but alas ! it applies to him only.

The most noteworthy traits of his character are probity

and a dread of lying. In this above all things he is distinguished from the Turk of Constantinople, who cheats and lies with really admirable impudence. He in no way differs from the Armenian or the Greek whose pastime it is to dupe the poor Mussulman yokel, and who laughs at him into the bargain.

His sobriety is proverbial; no European peasant could stand such frugality, nor subsist upon such simple fare as coarse black bread and draughts of cold water. Upon this the Turkish peasant easily lives. The dram-shop for him does not exist. In his personal habits he is very clean, for his religion exacts that he shall often perform his ablutions. For all that, he loftily ignores the simplest rules of health. His home is a mere den dug out of the ground, without furniture and void of windows.

In general, the Turkish peasant is a monogamist. If he take a second wife it is because he wishes "to have a second servant." But he treats this latter affectionately and adores his children. One cannot too greatly praise his kindness to animals. In many of the provincial districts the donkey has the privilege of two days' holiday in the week. This sentiment of gentleness, which does such honour to a bellicose people like the Turks, is to be remarked throughout the entire nation. Thus, at Stamboul, the inhabitants show great kindness to the vagabond street-dogs, and they are pained to see brutal Greeks and Levantines wantonly strike and kick the poor animals if they lie in their path. So soon as a bitch has puppies they lodge her at the side of the street, in an improvised kennel made out of an old box lined with straw and old bits of carpet. At the threshold of most doors in Stamboul you

will find little panikins full of water, while, during Ramazan the Turks provide food for all the dogs in their neighbourhood.

Let us here note a characteristic trait. If a young Turk is in a mood to lash out, after having come in, say, for a thumping legacy, he goes to the nearest baker's and buys a quantity of bread which he distributes among the dogs of the quarter. It is a great pleasure for him to see all those beaming eyes, snuffling noses and wagging tails. The poor brutes are so glad of a kind word or a pat, that their expressions of gratitude prove often over-demonstrative, for their muddy paws and muzzles are not very desirable things,—albeit readily, honestly offered.

The Turk is generous ; he rarely refuses alms to a beggar, and if unable to give it, he politely says, “Ynayet Allah !” May God help you ! This is certainly far more courteous than to send the beggar to the deuce, as do Europeans.

The hospitality of the Turk is proverbial. So soon as a visitor arrives, coffee and cigarettes are brought to him ; and if he consent to stay, all that is best in the house is set apart for his benefit ; but this is done with that innate tact which avoids importunate questioning.

It will be seen that the Ottoman peasant has qualities which prevent one from despairing as to the regeneration of the country. When the gangrenous element that makes the administration rotten shall have been removed, the Turkish race will once more be fused, welded, and find the wellsprings of its ancient vitality among the Turkoman tribes that people the high table-lands of Asia Minor.

To all these virtues the Turkish peasant, of course, joins imperfections. He is not an energetic worker. If he

delves, it is because he must ; and, so soon as he can, he returns to his *kef*, never troubling, never dreaming about his future position. His only care in producing is that his family may live. Why should he do more ? It would never profit him aught. First of all would come the tithes-collector, a veritable vampire who buys from the State the right of that oppression and extortion wickedly practised upon the poor peasant. Then, he has to submit to being fleeced by the governor-general (*vali*), the prefect (*mutes-sarif*) and sub-prefect (*caimakam*) ; while, if some exalted personage happens to be travelling through the country with his escort, he must be hospitable and find billet and board for all, as well as for soldiers passing through the village on their way to the dépôt. Such is the fear which prevails among the peasantry at the news of the approach of either "functionaries" or soldiers, that often they abandon all and take refuge in the mountains until the calamity be overpast.

There was once a governor who hankered after a farm worth a good 25,000 Turkish pounds. He sent for the proprietor and told him it suited his purposes to buy the estate, but at a price which he himself would fix, viz.: 5000 pounds. The unfortunate owner made a wry face ; but had to bow gracefully and accept this magnificent offer, knowing too well what remonstrance or opposition would cost him in the end. But this was not all. The *vali* sent again for him, and actually rented the farm to him at the modest rate of 2500 pounds ! Its lawful owner said nothing, but submitted to this additional piece of injustice. Finally, the astute governor exacted a further payment of 2500 pounds, due, as he said, for repairs on

the farm, for felling timber, etc., etc. In brief, the lawful owner was thus robbed of his property, without getting so much as a single penny in exchange. But he dare not complain; if he did, it would only make matters far worse. Under these circumstances, of what use is it to work for others? Of what use is it to improve each shining hour and make the soil yield every year richer fruit? One does as little work as possible; the earth is sure to give just enough for one's needs. To quote a practical instance, the use of manure is utterly unknown. Instead of employing it to make the soil richer, the peasants use it as a combustible; and what a combustible! From horse-dung and cow-dung women make strange sorts of patties and cakes, which they dry in the sun and then put away for winter fuel. Failing to find supplies either of wood or of charcoal, they are forced to make use of this filthy compound, which, when burnt, gives out a most nauseous smell.

In Constantinople, every day one sees barges laden with the refuse and sewerage of the city, which are calmly, indifferently emptied into the sea at the entrance of the Golden Horn. Each year some thousand francs' worth of valuable manure are thus flung into the Bosphorus, tainting, poisoning its waters; and all the while the soil grows more sterile through need of nourishment.

The Turkish cultivator, ground down by ruthless taxation, living from hand to mouth, having no one to teach or to advise him, becomes of necessity thriftless and improvident. He has neither the means nor the inclination to save and be economical; but he miserably vegetates, deprived of everything and leaving it to Allah to look after

his future. He is at the mercy of usurers who are the veritable scourge of the provinces. Jews, Armenians, Greeks, vie with each other in exploiting the poor innocent; and, hemmed in by these voracious harpies, the wretched Turk is driven to accept their monstrous conditions. His honesty often forces him to spend his whole life in working to pay off a skinflint creditor, who, each year manages to hold the victim tighter in his toils, and spider-like, sucks him dry to the very last drop.

To all this may be added the evils of conscription. By a deplorable decree, it is the Mussulman alone who must perforce serve as a soldier; Greeks and Armenians are exempted, on payment of a trifling tax yearly. With regard to the future of Turkey, nothing more lamentable than this system can be imagined. While from Ottoman agricultural districts the best workmen are thus called away, and thousands of fathers taken from their starving families, the Christians are quietly allowed to increase and multiply, improving their commerce and enlarging their families. So it comes that in certain districts the Greek element predominates over the Mussulman element. Another law yet more deplorable is the one that decides that all inhabitants of Constantinople, even Mussulmans, are exempt from serving in the army. Thus the system of recruiting exclusively affects the Turkish agriculturist population; to ruin it, to annihilate it, no better means than this could ever have been found.

What a grievous time it is each year when the young fellows have to "go for soldiers!" Most of them are married and have children. They must leave all; leave their family in want and distress for three or four years,

not counting the extra three in the reserve, the eighteen years in the *Landwehr*, and the six more in the *Landsturm*.

Thus fardels of all kinds are heaped upon the back of the poor cultivator. It is impossible to form a just idea of the wretched state of agriculture among the Ottoman rural population. Every year, almost, there is a dearth in the land, and hundreds die of starvation. The terrible famines of 1874 and 1878 will still be remembered by all ; and last year at Adana, though exaggerated descriptions were printed of it by an imaginative American missionary, the drought was yet a very severe one. Immense tracts of fertile land are left untilled. Outside Constantinople, outside any of the larger cities, the eye can only gaze upon vast, lonely steppes. M. Tchihatchew registers an area of 600 square miles, out of which hardly 50 miles have been cultivated. Wheat produce is only a fifth of what it ought to be ; so that, to supply the towns, grain has to be imported from Russia. The Turk does not even take the trouble to grind this foreign corn himself. He prefers to procure it in the form of flour, paying to Russia or to Hungary the cost of grinding. Suppose that war broke out : one would only have to blockade the entrance to the Bosphorus and to the Dardanelles ; Constantinople would then be simply starved out.

But not only wheat is wanting ; there is a lack of meat as well. In all the valleys there is wonderfully rich pasturage for cattle ; and yet no beasts are made to thrive upon it. One never sees any fine oxen or cows. Beef is almost a rarity ; milk costs more than it does in Europe ; while the better sort of butter is imported from Italy, another kind, more like wheel-grease, being supplied by

Russia, and grandly styled "Siberian Butter." Spread on shoe-leather, it is efficacious.

In this country which furnishes the West with the finest breed of horses in the world, the Syrian breed, one can only find little stunted bastard horses without nerve or staying powers. To provide the cavalry with mounts in 1866, Turkey had to purchase at a great cost 4000 to 5000 horses from Hungary.

Vineculture has somewhat improved, especially since France increased her import trade in raisins. But wine making is forbidden by the Coran, so poor Turkish peasants can take no part in an industry that for them might prove the most lucrative of all. It is exclusively in the hands of Greeks and Europeans.

With his callousness, his resignation, or, if you will, his fatalism, the Turkish cultivator lives patiently in the midst of all these stings and arrows of outrageous fortune; he suffers from them; he succumbs to them; but he never dreams of looking for their causes and for their remedy. These causes are:—

- 1st. The wretched organisation of the department of agriculture.

- 2nd. The insufficiency of means of transport.

- 3rd. The insecurity of the country districts.

- 4th. Ignorance.

The Ottoman department of agriculture is a most diverting institution. We will here make a silhouette of it, with certain details; and this will save us the description of other establishments of the same ilk.

At the head of it, of course gravely stands the Minister. He has so little to do, that about him there is little to

say. He may be a lawyer, or a colonel to-day, and to-morrow, an admiral, for, according to Turkish notions, no special competence is required from any of the Ministers. Thus you will often see men who have been in succession governors of provinces, heads of the Post and Telegraph Department, or Grand Viziers, suddenly made into Ministers of Public Instruction, of Police, of Public Works, or of Finance. The true impulse must of course come from the Director of the Agricultural Department. And he belongs to that class of Turkified Armenians about whom we shall have a word to say later on. Puffed up by a stay of some years in Paris in the midst of the Socialist effervescence of 1848, he makes grand parade of his special attainments. It is true, that while in France he followed a course of instruction at two government schools of agriculture; but for the good repute of those schools be it said, that he always bravely maintained his place among the lowest in the form; and his fellow students still have lively recollections of him, as suffering from an Oriental cancer of no common kind.

On his return to Turkey where all is a lie and a sham, reputation as well as knowledge, this knowing person soon saw what line to take and how, in the midst of universal ignorance, he could make capital out of his famous sojourn in France and of his brilliant career at two celebrated schools of Agriculture. Instead, therefore, of risking his renown by taking up practical agriculture, he preferred theoretical, administrative agriculture, for this last is far less compromising. And, thanks to that dogged spirit of intrigue peculiar to Armenians, he succeeded in making the Turks invent a so-called Department of Agriculture and then put him at its head.

The Minister who set his seal of approval to the decree founding this institution must verily have thought that a new era of prosperity and progress had dawned for Ottoman agriculture. Unfortunately the newly created department met with the same fate as that of others. With agriculture one had little to do ; but one had a great deal to do with intriguing. The department, filled as it was with persons less competent than its chief, soon became a sort of hot-bed for jealousy and petty ambition. One tries for advancement ; another strains at a decoration ; a third sighs for an appointment. Each endeavours to upset his rival, to distance his fellow-runner in the match for place and profit, but no one has ever had the courage to open a technical book. If an important matter presents itself, he is at once hampered, "got at," by someone who wants to make capital out of it, or else in vanity to use it as an advertisement for his "zeal and unflinching devotion" to his Sovereign. As to the country's interests, as to the advance of agriculture or the welfare of the peasant, not a thought is given to such things ; the idea alone were enough to dumbfounder all "zealous functionaries !"

Should any technical difficulty arise, the Director of Agriculture sweeps it aside with matchless *aplomb*. Who can contradict, who shall gainsay him ? Worthy of note indeed are the pontifical air and tone with which he dictates his imperious orders, for he is clever enough to know that in the eyes of the Turks a hesitating air brands you at once as an ignorant poltroon. You must be grand, omniscient in mien and port. With what majesty did he not one day order the vines to be irrigated with sea water, and this on hillsides situated some twenty metres above the

level of the Sea of Marmora ! Then, again, his lofty interdiction of the manufacture of sulphate of ammonia, being hurtful, so he said, to agriculture ! What charming impromptu names he found for pestilent blights that touched the lemon and fig-trees and ruined the silk-worm crop ! But let us have done with this mountebank ; at least such poor Europeans as were languishing in the marsh lands had to thank him for providing them with a few moments of hilarity. What serious result can ever be looked for from such an *administration d'opéra bouffe* in which the leading part is taken by a clown who "goes in for" agriculture much as the famous General Boum "went in for" strategy, and who gives the key-note to his band of insignificant satellites ? They sing and act their parts with indifference ; all they think about is their salary, which is always overdue.

Latterly many young Turkish students have been sent to France, where they have benefited by the sound and thorough education which the best schools there could give them. But, when back again in Turkey, they at once discovered that education is capital that cannot be utilised, and that their first and foremost duty is to be agreeable to their superiors. Knowledge is nothing ; flattery is all. Indeed, their schemes for improvement only disturb the sweet serenity of the bureaux, and detract from the lustre of the splendid planet round which they revolve, the omnipotent, omniscient Director. So, if they be men of ideas, they are promptly sent off into the heart of the provinces ; but in a haphazard way, with no definite instructions to carry out, and above all, with no recognised authority whatever. Here it is thought that laziness may

destroy their zeal, and that the conviction of their utter uselessness may effectually serve to calm their ardour. In a few years they become as sterile, as supine, as the rest, sagely siding with the non-progress party, and comfortably abandoning all idea of advancement or of improvement. Then, when emasculate and flaccid they fall to the dead level, the Department tolerates and even rewards them as good and faithful servants who straightway enter into the joy of their lord.

One of the greatest misfortunes of Turkey is that no count is taken of a man's intellectual or moral worth. Place, promotion; all that goes by kissing. Here, if anywhere, one may confirm the melancholy truth of the proverb: "A prophet is not without honour save in his own country." As a general rule, the obscurest, shallowest charlatan is sure to get the better of the man who is honest, conscientious and thorough. Thus many young Turks may be seen wandering about Stamboul ex-pupils of the *Ecole Centrale de Paris*, of the *Ecole des Mines*, or other leading French Colleges; and for years and years they stroll about in search of a place, going from Department to Department, from Ministry to Ministry, wasting their precious years of youth, and losing gradually but surely all their zeal and energy of purpose. They spend whole afternoons in the bureaux, sitting hands folded and cross-legged on shabby divans, fingering their eternal bead necklaces, in an attitude half-solicitous, half-resigned. This exhausting employment soon saps their energy and weakens their character. Very soon they go with the current. When disillusionised, they at once perceive that their chiefs have only one policy, and that is, to thwart all attempts at progress, and ferociously

to maintain the *statu quo*. These mandarins are all for remaining stationary, immovable; a step forward might shake their prestige, might damage their reputation; and so they are ever on the watch for malleable, supple characters, for washed-out intellects, for limp, gelatinous temperaments.

In order to get on, to come to the front, the best thing is to forget all that you have learnt, and unhesitatingly to accept worn-out, superannuated ideas. Highly-trained hypocrites will even go so far as to say that they prefer these ideas, and will silyly declare, that to be a good functionary, one can never really be ignorant enough.

A sly Turk who has managed to hide under his fez the wit of a Parisian, said once in our hearing to one of his compatriots who had just returned from the Western Babylon:—"Listen to me, my good friend. Buy a big fez—the biggest you can find. Shove it right-down over your head till it touches your eye-brows. Order a coat cut Turkish fashion and a pair of double-soled boots. Don't wear those fly-away cravats; they are far too modern. Say little, and above all never utter the word 'Paris.' Pretend to have wholly forgotten that wicked city. If folk ask you about it, shoot out the lip like a man disillusioned. If with all that you can manage to grow a stomach, verily you are a saved man!"

This explains to us why the authorities do nothing for agriculture, and why the latter is in such a wretched state; and so we may understand how it is that this country, the richest and most fertile in the world, presents such a picture of barrenness and neglect. From this land it was that Europe got corn, the peach, the cherry, the apricot, the plum, besides plants, shrubs and trees in plenty. It was

the land of Canaan, the earthly Paradise, the granary of the world ; and now it barely can give food to its sparse population.* Throughout this fertile land many persons perish of hunger ; in the interior, whole towns tumble down to ruin ; the highroads have become dangerous ravines, all overgrown with thorns and briars ; the stone bridges, built by Sultans in bygone days, have fallen in and are now patched up into shaky fords with rotten timber and logs of pine. So rickety are these that the traveller dare not risk crossing them on horseback. He sends his horse on by a servant, and walks over on foot, the safest way being to find a ford hard by, which peasants have clumsily constructed for their own use. In some of the plains one notes a minaret in ruins, the last vestige, this, of a vanished village, and a sign that life in the land is slowly becoming extinct.

What we have just said regarding the Department of Agriculture is equally applicable to the Administration of Forests. No country is richer in timber than Turkey. It furnishes several rare species. France for instance has only twelve sorts of oak ; Asia Minor yields fifty-two kinds, twenty-six of which are not to be found elsewhere. The trees by their exuberance and height show how excellent are the climate and the soil in which they thrive. And yet the work of wanton devastation surpasses all belief. Whole forests have been hacked down and never a thought given to their renewal ; they are sold for a miserable pittance to concessionists who know the resistless almighty power of *baksheesh* ; and so, as a result, we have a wild massacre of trees and limitless pillage.

* Six inhabitants to every square kilometre.

Just to get a little ready money the Government has bartered, squandered away incalculable treasure. There you have the *Après nous le déluge* theory pushed to its utmost limits.

The forests are for the most part devastated by their inhabitants. They chop the trunks of the great trees in half, and scoop out these halves, making basins for the rain which slowly rots the heart of the wood. This is said to make the work of fire-wood-chopping easier. In other districts the trees are burnt down, as their ashes are often needed for cooking purposes. *Que voulez-vous?* There is no regular system of exploitation, no markets for the sale of timber, no *personnel* nor any competent chief to direct and superintend the forestry work. What is to be done with riches that can profit them nothing? The peasant's vandalism may just as well continue unchecked. For that matter, the habit of burning down forests is common among all Oriental people. Shepherds and peasants start a forest fire sometimes wantonly, but more often to effect a clearing and get at virgin soil which for a few years will yield splendid crops. And then, if there be a falling off, more trees are burnt, and another portion of the forest is destroyed. All this effectually serves to dry up the soil and the streams that nourish it; so that by degrees the miserable peasant finds himself a victim to his own wanton stupidity.

About twenty years ago, a French mission came to Turkey to devise ways and means for saving the wrecked forests and for reconstructing them. It laid down elaborate plans for proper exploitation and for re-grafting. What has become of these fine and laboriously-conceived theories?

They are still spoken of with admiration, but the system of intermittent plunder still holds good ; and Turkey are long will not have timber sufficient to repair the vessels of her fleet. But why should any anxiety be felt about a future in which no one any longer believes ?

For agriculture as for forestry, the insufficiency of means of transport is a most terrible obstacle. Besides the main roads that are often in a deplorable state, there are only bad routes along which no carriage can pass. Parts of the so-called carriage-roads are so bad that vehicles drive in preference over the open country that stretches on either side of the *chaussée*. By virtue of this simple system, there are three or four contiguous and parallel roads ; and, as each wears out, another is made by encroaching upon the fallow land lying beside it which is rarely or ever cultivated. Transport service can only be effected by horses, camels or mules. In Constantinople you will see long files of scraggy horses all lashed together and dragging seven or eight blocks of unhewn stone clumsily tied on with cord to their saddle-girths, or a dozen planks placed cross-wise on the brutes' backs, one end aloft and the other trailing in the mud. So in the same way, sand, chalk, bricks, tiles and firewood are carried from place to place. The cost of transport when performed in this petty fashion of course makes the price of provisions very much higher, and hinders the peasant from successfully resisting foreign competition. There is no other resource for the cultivator but to bury his surplus crop underground, as he cannot find a market for it.

Under such conditions it becomes not only impossible for the inhabitants of districts situate far inland to export

their grain, but even different centres can have no communication the one with the other. A district where the crops have given a rich surplus cannot send off its wealth to a district where famine is decimating the population. While such a state of things exists, it is vain to talk of the advance of Ottoman Agriculture ; nay, while it lasts, the country must ever remain menaced by the perils and the horrors of famine.

True, for some years past, there has been a talk of railways, but how many of the fine plans put forward have met with success? In Asia Minor, there are only the lines from Smyrna to Alacher and to Nazli, with a short line from Adana to the interior. Nothing has yet been done in this direction, though groups of concessionists, English, French, and German, swarm. They are at great pains to study the route, prepare their plans, and to draw up their schemes clearly and succinctly, and, above all, gain the goodwill of the pashas. But nothing can ever conquer the callousness of the Turk, nor his hostility to the European. Every evening new promises are given, that with the morrow are put off ; it is one series of perpetual postponements, of shifts, of sham objections and a whole string of ludicrous formalities that are made endless on purpose. For the Turks, though they will not roundly refuse to hear of progress, yet do their best to discourage every attempt at securing it.

One of the most singular examples of this hostility may be furnished by the story of the Moudania Broussa railway, quite close to Constantinople. Broussa, once the ancient (and some day perhaps the future) capital of the Ottoman empire, has an important trade in silk and cotton embroideries. Its

commerce in wine, fruit and vegetables is also considerable, while its thermal springs are widely renowned. The Government accordingly decided to construct a railway between this beautiful city and the Moudania, the port whence steamers start for Constantinople. This line, forty-two kilometres in length, may be found marked on any map by the unwitting tourist; yet let him not be deceived; the railway is there, but it does not work. Since 1875 the line is complete, the platform, station, sheds are all erected and in readiness, even the locomotives; and yet all is at a standstill. It is the railway belonging to the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood. The sheds are empty and mossgrown, the locomotives slumber in a corner, the rails are all rusty, and winter rains have done much to destroy the railroad that in some way resembles the skeleton of a serpent. The peasants living near carry off anything they may fancy, while the refreshment room at the station is given up to Angora goats. Who will play Prince Charming to this drowsy railway and rouse it from its lethargy? Many have tried to do so, but none could resist that terrible enchanter, or rather disenchanter, the Ottoman Government.

Side by side with the bad roads and difficulties of communication we have brigandage, which thrives and flourishes. Talk to a Turkish official about the dangerous state of the provincial districts, and he will assure you that no country enjoys greater tranquillity and order than his own. But travel through these districts and question the inhabitants; read a few of the bald reports in local and official journals, and then judge for yourself as to the truth of such a pleasant assertion. Everywhere brigandage thrives and

prosper. In one place Bulgarians are to the fore, in another Albanians ; here, Greeks ; there, Kurds, Turcomans, Zeibeks. At any moment these villains make a raid on villages, kill or garotte the inhabitants, plunder the crops, carry off the cattle, sack houses, and rape pretty girls or take their rich fathers prisoner. For these latter the brigands ask a heavy ransom, the amount of which they obligingly fix themselves ; and if, at a given hour, the money be not paid over to them at the place indicated, an ear or the nose of the victim is hacked off prior to beheadal. Another pastime much in vogue is to burn prisoners in a tar-barrel. A notorious bandit, when captured lately, made it his boast to have roasted in such a fashion no fewer than eleven people. Not even Turkish functionaries are spared. A governor-general was stabbed in the streets of his capital, another was butchered with all his family, while a bishop was seized on his own premises and carried off to the hills. These are not exceptional cases, they are well-nigh daily ones ; of so common occurrence as to be hardly noticed. They do not happen only in remote districts and mountainous regions, but also in the suburbs of great cities. Outside the gates of Smyrna you are no safer than outside those of Salonica. The recent capture of four young Englishmen at Bournabat near Smyrna, and the subsequent death of Mr Oscar Whittall, one of the prisoners are still fresh in everybody's memory ; at Kartal, at Kandilli, on the Bosphorus, brigands swarm. They killed two gardeners at the latter place last autumn, roasting one wretched man alive by soaking him in petroleum. Even at Pera, it is unsafe to venture down the slope into the foul-smelling Kassim Pasha quarter, for stabbing and robbery are over common

there. At night in the side-streets Europeans have often lost their money and their lives.

Tragic stories of this sort are a byword in the villages of the interior. Here, a traveller's head was chopped off; there, a consul was massacred, and his wife and servant violated. At another place a farm was burned down and its inmates put to horrible tortures in order to discover where their money and valuables were hidden. The villagers dare not resist; they either flee or yield to their ferocious assailants. They even fear to ask the police or gendarmery to help, dreading a more awful vengeance. They prefer to be on the strong side, and keep in with the brigands. No such thing as public safety exists; and the peasant has only one safeguard, viz., to be as poor as possible. With nothing to lose, he has nothing to fear.

Brigandage in Turkey is far from being regarded as a shameful trade. To have a "brother in the mountains" is a common vaunt; and you will hear a man frankly confess that he is a brigand who has retired from business. Several, as age comes upon them, turn into respectable sheep-dealers. One became a monk at Mount Athos; and another of my acquaintance ironically entered the gendarmery.

Thus, everything is against the peasant: the authorities, who do nothing but harass him; the usurer, who sucks him dry; the brigand, who robs him of all he possesses. Can it be wondered, then, that under such conditions, he is such a poor farmer, so ignorant, so stupid, so maladroit? It cannot be affirmed that Ottoman agriculture is in its infancy; that were to say too little. It is better to state at once that it has remained just as Adam left it on the day after his fall. Assuredly at the time of the Greeks

and Romans it was more advanced ; it has since gone backwards. If the soil in Turkey still produces something, that is because it yet retains somewhat of its former extraordinary fecundity. There is no real attempt at tillage. The ground is lightly raked up and a few handfuls of seed scattered over it that are never properly covered up. There is no system of irrigation, no use of manure. So much for Ottoman agriculture. The fruit trees grow at hap hazard, as they best may ; they are never lopped or pruned. So much, again, for Ottoman arboriculture. Only in the marshy districts does produce receive greater care, so as to prove remunerative.

Yet by degrees this fertility diminishes and the cultivator, apathetic though he be, begins to grow uneasy. He has heard that his ancestors in their day got back from the ground eighteen or twenty per cent. of seed to one per cent. given ; now, it hardly yields six or seven. So he looks about for a remedy of this evil and goes to the Department of Agriculture for advice. And the Department of Agriculture promises salvation and a remedy by giving him technical instruction. Let us see a little how this system of technical instruction has been organised.

The idea of founding a Technical School of Agriculture to train up Turks to be thrifty, competent farmers, is in itself an admirable one, deserving of all praise. The way in which this idea has been realised, is, however, the most ridiculous imaginable. In a land so eminently favoured by Nature, it would have been easy to find a piece of excellently fertile soil, well-watered and near some highroad or railway. Several such spots were suggested. But intrigue and *baksheesh* sufficed to let the authorities pitch

upon a dry, sterile plateau called Hal Kalé, devoid of water and without verdure of any kind ; a solitary spot in the mountains, far removed from any main route or town or railway. To convert this arid place into anything like a centre of fertility, large sums of money had to be spent. To maintain on these desolate heights some hundred pupils and with a numerous staff of professors and workmen, the cost, was of course, considerable, as provisions, clothing and every necessary had to be transferred thither as to a desert island. Even to buy a pair of boots one had to waste six hours in going and returning.

That is not all, however. On this plateau, under the guise of farmhouses, a veritable fortress was speedily built, having huge walls and an infinity of windows and postern gates. On the esplanade in front of it, ten thousand men could easily have manœuvred. There was no thought about agriculture, about the needs and requirements of a college. It was just one orgie of bricks and mortar ; a lavish heaping of stone and tile, the enterprising workmen and architects having a great joy therewith. Assuredly, if they had not been stopped, they would have piled up the masonry until it touched the sky. This architectural freak, however, did not last for more than one winter ; in 1886, a goodly portion of the building fell in. Two hundred and fifty thousand francs had been spent already ; and another hundred and fifty thousand were needed to complete the masterpiece.

Luckily, however, at this juncture public attention was called to the scandal. A committee was appointed which soon decided that the buildings had been so badly constructed as in no way to serve their purpose. When the

Director of the Agriculture Department asked for funds to complete his noble work, the Council of Ministers amiably invited him to pull down half the "fortress" and re-build it according to the system adopted by local engineers. So it is evident that all poor rustics in Asia Minor will have yet long to wait before they derive any benefit from the Department of Agriculture.

We have sought to present the Turkish agriculturist as a good fellow, honest, sincere, but like one of his own sheep, fleeced and maltreated by everybody. How is it that such difference should exist between Tweedledum and Tweedledee, between the rustic Turk, who is the oppressed, and the Ottoman "functionary," who is the oppressor?

Both are the same race; they speak the same language; they have the same religion. And yet it is impossible to imagine two more utterly different beings. It is because the official world is a poisonous, pernicious world, infecting all who move in it; honesty gives place there to base and impudent venality; good faith, candour are regarded as proofs of imbecility. Lying is "the only wear," untruth the only coin which passes current; and respect is transformed into abject servility.

Add to this harmonious *ensemble* a ferocious thirst for material enjoyment a limitless lust for lucre; the venom of rivalry, green-eyed jealousy and ambition without scruple or check; and there you have the melancholy picture of the moral condition of the governing class, of the officers of the State. Rarely in such a sea of corruption does one find vestiges of the race's original qualities, such as benevolence, simplicity, courtesy and gentle treatment of the weak or the wronged.

The evil comes from above. A Turkish proverb says, *Balük bashdan cocar*, "A fish stinks in the head first." This hints at the corruption of those in power. And in truth it is from the sovereigns and their surroundings that the poison has descended to the people.

To grow convinced of this, one should read the history of Turkey, a history little known in Europe, but which is just one terrible tissue of abominable butchery and lust. As one turns the pages of it, they seem to stain the fingers with blood. Beneath the glory of conquerors and the splendour of victorious armies, we find a series of foul atrocities without parallel in the annals of any nation; giving records of human beings tortured with red-hot pincers, roasted on spits, cut into slices, grilled alive. Thus it is but with horror that we can regard the palace of the Old Seraglio, that at once provokes admiration and repugnance. The blood of the massacred seems to stream down its grey marble walls, while heads of victims gibber at us from the spikes that top them. See, from yonder postern gate, corpses sewn up in sacks were flung out into the Bosphorus. Behind those gratings, strangling and poisoning were done. That is the cage in which a Sultan imprisoned his brothers; here stands the porphyry column on which grand viziers were beheaded; and there the door whence women of the harem were thrown into the sea. This palace, all of it, was once the theatre of the most revolting orgies; blood-thirsty monsters here held revel and gave rein to their ferocity and their lust.

Can one believe that the character and dignity of the most energetic nation on earth could ever have resisted such fearful contagion? Go to Yedi-Coulé, to the Castle

of the Seven Towers. There you will be face to face with horrors. There victims were hung, drawn, quartered, chopped to pieces. There you will see the so-called Well of Blood; and you can read on the walls, the inscriptions of the doomed. Only lately, in a walled up room were found piles of human bones and skulls. Why was all this? Because, in this fair land, under a sky so clement, all belonged to one man, to one tyrant, who knew no law other than that of his vengeance and his lust.

But there have been autocrats in Europe, some one will urge. In Turkey, autocracy is quite another thing. The nation does not exist. There is only one man, sovereign and absolute master of all things and all people. He is proprietor of all lands, houses and estates, and of all the wealth of all his subjects. He can dispose of their money as of their life; can take from them wife and children. The army is his also. In a phrase, there is no such thing as fatherland for the Osmanli; he and his belong to the Padishah!

It is true that this state of things has to-day undergone modification, but the principle yet exists; and it is just this principle which in bygone days began to act as gangrene for Turkey. Then, what awful records have we of the Sultans' reigns; of Selim who massacred 40,000 persons suspected of heresy, and was for exterminating all the Christians of the Empire; of Amurad III, that drunken debauchee who murdered his five brothers; of Mahommed III who killed nineteen of his brothers, and let his own son be butchered; of Murad IV who caused the massacre of 100,000 people; of Mahommed IV, who gave full power to his Grand Vizier to work what monstrous infamy he listed,

in common with the Janissaries, that evil band who seized upon comely Christian youths in the streets, and forced them to submit to their unnatural lust; who strangled their rulers, and butchered women and children at will. In our own century, even, we have the massacre of the Greeks at Constantinople; and that of the Chiotés, when 25,000 persons were strangled and 45,000 others led off into slavery; the persecution of Christians in the East; the Bulgarian atrocities; and the throttling of 15,000 Maronites, really provoked by the Turkish Government, but hypocritically laid to the score of the Druses. Then we come to that ferocious monster Abd-ul Aziz (murdered by his Ministers in the Dolma Baghtché Palace, by opening his veins), and finally to the luckless Moorad, buried alive in his palace at Tcheraghan, accused of dipsomania by some, and canonised as a martyr by others.

There you have history, official history; but the study of it should lead one to go further and make one penetrate into the inner life of all these sovereigns, viziers and pashas. Then one would speedily conclude that no more frightful history than that of Turkey exists. After reading such terrible pages it is like waking from a nightmare to see all these grave Turks in long coat and fez calmly walking along the bridge at Karakeuy. But have a care! they are civilized only on the surface; at the first opportunity the brute reasserts itself.

A people used to live under such a system of ferocious oppression was fatally doomed to decay. No sooner did the princes give an example of blind and brutal egoism than straightway all the functionaries, great and small, followed in their wake and played their part of petty despots to the

best advantage. All glory, happiness and interest being centred in the sovereign, the nation slowly died out, unthought-of, uncared-for.

Terrified at such alarming progress towards dissolution the last Sultans sought to effect certain reforms. Abdul Medjid made a step in the right direction, but how many of his projected reforms were ever executed? The habits and customs of the country were opposed to such schemes; thus the loyal endeavours of this caliph were checked and paralysed.

At the present day Turkey is governed by a Sultan who is well-intentioned, moderate, benevolent and animated by an evident desire to promote the prosperity of his people. He makes considerable sacrifices in favour of public instruction, corrects administrative abuses and devotes all his efforts towards the creation and development of national industry. Turks joyfully hail Abdul Hamid's peaceful reign of reform, yet not one of them will move a single step along the road which he points out. They wish the country to progress, yes; but nobody will do anything towards this end. Each person doggedly persists in remaining where he is, and asks that others be made to move on. So this reign, like those before it, will repair nothing, for in Turkey all is irreparable; and the country can only be saved by its complete and thorough reorganisation on new ground, in a more bracing climate. "The Sick Man" must be made to breathe the pure air of the great plains of Asia, Stamboul's vitiated atmosphere is killing him. By a strange and sad continuity of events, it is the sovereign, the most enlightened of his race, who himself is helping to work the ruin of his Empire and who is

fighting vainly against the fatal consequences of his predecessors' sins.

That, then, is the actual situation in Turkey. At the bottom of the ladder is the agricultural class, too poor and too ignorant to try and save the nation by a miracle of energy ; at the top of it, the official world, rotten with egoism and every shameful vice ; and with no belief left in the future of the race.

Corruption has come from the top ; regeneration can never come from the bottom. To save this nation, a series of catastrophes is needed, which shall upset the administrative aristocracy and of necessity bring the sovereign into close contact with the people—we were going to say, with the democracy, did such word not infer that the men composing it had a certain cognisance of their rights and moreover, a firm desire to guard them.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TURKISH OFFICIAL.—HOW HE OFFICIATES.—SALARIES
THAT ARE CHIMERICAL AND SALARIES THAT ARE FABULOUS.
—THEORY AS TO THE UTILITY OF BAKSHEESH.—BUDGET-
WEEVILS.

WE have now to touch the core of the evil, for we are going to speak of the Turkish official. In Europe his reputation counts as none of the best ; but in reality he is worth even less than that reputation, poor though it be.

The candidate for a Government appointment is generally ill-fitted for his post, ignorance being habitual to his nation. When he has gone through a successful course of study at the Galata Seraï College or at the *Ecole d'Administration*, this is doubtless in his favour, though the latter establishment leaves much to be desired, and hardly passes the level of primary schools in France. But more often than not, such guarantees are never exacted. He gets his appointment because he is the son, or the grandson of a pasha ; because he has a relative at the Palace ; in a word, because he is backed up by some "influential personage." The art of self-recommendation by proxy, *l'art du piston*,

as they say in France, has in Turkey reached quite phenomenal proportions ; but the curious part of it is that this backing-up is all priced, all saleable.

We do not only allude to the little presents made to a "high functionary" who has taken the successful candidate under his august patronage. More than that, the whole affair degenerates into a hard and fast bargain. As the young aspirant is often devoid of all resources, he is obliged to sign a contract by which he agrees to hand over to his patron a part of his salary for a fixed period. This reminds one of the percentage claimed by servants' or governesses' registry-offices in France or in England. In Turkey, again, it is the system adopted for the appointment and advancement of a Government official. When a post falls vacant, there is lively competition and a perfect ferment of intrigue. Each candidate secures a "protector" who interests himself in the success of his *protégé*, and, for monetary reasons, tries to make him distance rivals and come out first on the list. What cunning, what wiles and flattery, does not this magnate use, the anxious candidate meanwhile pestering him night and day, and feeding the fire of his zeal !

The nomination when proposed by the Minister competent to do so, has to be ratified by His Highness the Grand Vizier and then submitted to the Imperial Chancery for the Sovereign's sanction. No sooner is the news of his appointment officially announced, than the nominee is at once besieged by the clerks and office employés of his patron all eager for their share of *baksheesh*. By what subtle intuition did these clever underlings divine that some business was afoot between their master and the

candidate? It verily does honour to the wonderful scent of the Oriental, that he can discover the odour of a *baksheesh* like the odour of truffles, while yet buried in the earth. The nominee, puffed up with pride and joy, is lavish in his "tips" right and left to voracious subalterns, determining to make up for such generosity later, when he in turn shall be able to bleed his colleagues.

He then proceeds to learn the routine of his work, which is not very complicated. It mainly consists in studying official habits, and how speedily to assume the character of the consummate functionary. The first things to be acquired are calm, gentleness, imperturbable politeness and profound obsequiousness towards superiors. He must learn how to flatter his chiefs by gradual doses given at judicious intervals—not less, say, than three times a week. He must above all avoid doing, or proposing to do, anything that might be disagreeable to them, for, in Turkey, officials hate to be troubled by work, by objections or by remarks of any kind. The neophyte should never forget this; moreover, it is easy for him to maintain an attitude of prudent reserve, he being never asked to take the initiative nor to act upon his own responsibility.

For all administrative operations there is a sort of consecrated formula, never varying, which has to be adapted to the business in hand, or, rather, the business has to be adapted to the formula; as the essence of the matter is nothing as compared with the form. Every document not drawn up in accordance with this superannuated formula is considered as null and void. It must be cast in the ancient mould or it is worthless.

To shape a budding functionary it is usually the custom

to put him for three or four years in an office where he has constant opportunity of studying the said formulæ and can thus cram them into his head. Having thoroughly mastered them, he straightway is qualified to edit and draw up official documents, for he has learnt the knack of writing with the requisite pomp and inflation of style. Turkish official language, be it noted, is distinguished by phrases almost immeasurable in length; the great art in building up these is to interweave a batch of incidental propositions that are casually grafted on to gerundives and participles with one single verb tagged on at the end. Phrase-architecture of this sort is of course a hindrance to clarity of thought and of comprehension; and so it comes that such documents have to be commented upon and interpreted like any obscure passage in Holy Writ. At times you may see three or four Government underlings in close confab over some Note that has come from the Sublime Porte (from the Grand Vizierate, probably), and all are cracking their heads to try and discover what instructions are wrapped up in these sinuous, winding, slippery phrases. But in this roundabout style lies the very genius of the Turkish language; so why should we quarrel with it? His head once stuffed with these indigestible formulæ, the poor functionary is considered extremely capable: higher than this, he certainly never intends to aim. To read a technical work treating questions which ought to interest him professionally, never enters his head; nor dare he attempt to introduce improvements in his branch of the service. Still less will he venture to put any personal touches to a document or correct in it some erroneous notion. And so, all his life long he remains incompetent

to judge of questions that are daily submitted to him. He does not administrate ; he is an official ; and he officiates. That is all.

The wonderful sloth of Turkish bureaucracy is proverbial. I would only remind those luckless Europeans of it who have ever essayed to stir up these mastodons. The Turk will make the same person wait upon him ten or a dozen times to save him the bother of writing a letter. He will invent the most astounding excuses to avoid having to scrawl three lines. To dip his reed-pen in the ink is for him a painful effort ; to look for a sheet of paper is a veritable act of heroism ; to get up might in all likelihood make him ill. He will gladly offer the visitor coffee and cigarettes ; will listen to him with patience ; will promise all ; and infallibly ask him to call in a few days. Business is thus dragged on in Turkey over months and over years. I myself went *eighty-three times* to the Ministerial Department to obtain the solution of a little matter, which after twenty months of waiting is not yet settled. I should like such of my compatriots as rebel against the languor of French administration, to be sent out for a while to Constantinople. They would return to their homes humbled and repentant, accusing themselves of black ingratitude.

If an Ottoman functionary be absent through death or change of office, all that he has begun is broken off. The papers left on his desk are religiously respected ; with him his office dies. Six months should generally be allowed for a reply to be obtained in any business matter pending, ten months being needed for a nomination, provided you go every day to the bureau in question and bully the officials there. For payments you must dawdle about a year ; there

are no limits to waiting for a concession ; it may last ten, fifteen, twenty years. As a result of the functionary's laziness, we have his unpunctuality ; and in this he is singularly favoured by the system of timekeeping that obtains in Turkey.

Twelve o'clock corresponds with sunset, so that every day the hour alters, there being a delay for six months, and an advance for six months of the year. Hence the necessity of tampering daily with one's watch, moving the hands forwards or backwards ; and no chronometer, however solidly made, can ever resist such treatment, while nobody can flatter himself that he has really got the exact time.

The Mosque of Yeni Djami is supposed to give it, but as every Turk cannot pass this charming edifice daily, it is plain that complete anarchy reigns among Mussulman watches. This irregularity in time brings with it irregularity in habits. Two persons agree to meet at a fixed hour, but neither comes to the place of meeting until long after the time appointed, each counting upon the other's delay. Clerks go to their offices at a certain hour, and they leave them at a certain hour also. It is the system of "Pretty nearly," or "Just about that."

Temperament and vanity make the Ottoman functionary afraid to be too soon ; and thus there are these insufferable delays which go far beyond the patience of Europeans, and serve to exasperate the coolest of them. Want of precision in habits and in ideas, that is one of the cardinal vices of Ottoman administrators, if indeed it be not a dishonest method of bringing business matters to grief, that do not quite hit their taste.

In order to see a person for ten minutes you must lose a whole day. There is no recognised hour for visits or for meals. You eat when there is food going, when you feel hungry, when it graciously pleases your cook to serve up something. If asked to dine with a Turk, go to him in the morning, but do not expect to sit down to table till evening. At any rate, look upon your whole day as wasted; and as you are expected to stay the night with your host, this helps you to get through the best part of another day as well.

When the young functionary is well saturated with the spirit of sloth and of routine, he has only to think of two things, viz.—to draw his salary, and by hook or crook to secure promotion. Verily, the former operation is a painful one; professional beggary even has less bitterness about it. Let a Turkish official present himself at the Pay Department. The cashier replies in brutal fashion:—

“There’s no money!”

“When will there be any?”

“How do I know?”

After such an encouraging announcement the Turk has nothing for it but to wait, and finally fall into the clutches of the Jews. Arrears of salary often date back seven, eight, twelve months, sometimes more. To a compatriot of ours twenty-two months’ salary was overdue. But in this respect, be it averred, Turks are worse off than foreigners.

What is to be done? The poor Osmanli, who almost always has a family and several children, tries to make capital out of his official position. If charged to conclude a bargain, he comes to a private understanding with the contractor by which the State shall be swindled, fleeced.

If sent on a mission of inspection, he allows himself to be bribed, and glosses over ill deeds he has been charged to denounce and punish. To the items of his travelling expenses he sticks on a heavy percentage which more than reimburses him for his actual outlay. In a word he cheats the State in every possible way. Then, before submitting a business proposal to the proper quarter, he exacts a fee ; and if this be not high enough he can make the whole thing collapse, taking a bribe meanwhile from the other side, from the parties competing with those who originally solicited his intervention. The affair may eventually come to grief ; but he, anyway, has got his money twice over. So he sells his credit and influence by retail ; it is the only tangible means of revenue which his position affords him.

The evil would not be as great as it is if the official had loyalty or patriotism sufficient to protect before all things the interests of his country and not to compromise its future. Were this but so, one could really not accuse him of a great crime if he took a *baksheesh* here and there for private business affairs which he helped to make successful. For the State does not pay him ; and, poor fellow, he has to live. But unfortunately the thirst for gain is so great that more often than not the country's interests are unscrupulously sacrificed, and its future compromised in irremediable fashion. What disgraceful monopolies, what fatal contracts, what ruinous concessions have thus been granted ! If Turkey to-day is prevented from rising, it is because her best resources have been taken from her by degrees. Piece by piece the country's prosperity has been delivered over to rapacious European capitalists ; and to-day the Govern-

ment finds itself inextricably entangled in contracts which make its ruin sure.

One of the most famous examples of these thievish contracts was the construction of the railway line from Constantinople to Adrianople. In this business a certain baron of the financial world and other enterprising gentlemen managed to *rouler* the Ottoman Government with truly astonishing coolness. As the State granted a very high subvention for every kilometre constructed, the concessionists conceived the ingenious idea of multiplying the number of kilometres, increasing the entire length of the route by constant curves and windings. Study the Adrianople railway; it is the very apotheosis of the curve. The line lovingly meanders round the borders of lakes and streamlets and over the undulating valleys; it makes flourishes great and small, seeming to catch at every possible pretext for dawdling on the way. It reminds one of those rivers of which our good friend Fénelon speaks in *Télémaque*: "By long *détours*, they seem to retrace their steps as if they would fain return to their source, being unable to quit such an enchanting land." So, too, the Adrianople line seems always as if it were fain to return to Constantinople. As poetry, even though in prose, this all is charming enough; but it becomes far less so when an industrial and economic question is at stake, and when one reflects that this lengthening of the line is just nothing more or less than a base trick to cheat the Ottoman Government and extract from it a heavier subvention. For the profit of a few speculators, the interests of the whole country have been sacrificed and its future seriously handicapped. Thanks to all these curves, the speed at which trains travel does

not exceed the honest jogtrot of a tramway, going at the rate of twenty kilometres an hour—sometimes less. The very way in which the line is laid down would not permit of rapid locomotion, and express trains can consequently never run. To-day this question becomes graver as the branch-line now joins the main one to Sofia, Belgrade, Pesth, Vienna and Paris. It is the direct route between England, France, Constantinople and Western Asia—the one which the Orient express is to take. The branch line from Adrianople to the Turkish capital will thus inevitably have to be reconstructed in parts, mended in others, and generally straightened out.

Moreover, on this astounding railway, all the stations (such as those of Adrianople, Ouzoun-Koupru and others) are situate at an hour or an hour-and-a half's distance from the respective towns. At Adrianople, indeed, a new railway or tramway ought to be constructed, connecting the city with the railway station. Such mysterious surprises make one think that one has been transported to a land of *opéra-bouffe*; and instinctively one listens to catch the distant strains of Offenbach. For, after all, these plans and specifications were all submitted to the Imperial Ottoman Government, whose commissioners superintended the construction of the line and who, surely, had no need of a skilful engineer to point out to them that the whole affair was one colossal hoax that has now cost the State some tens of millions of francs. But wherefore wonder? In the East there is an all-powerful magician, the Divine Baksheesh, who can darken the sight and dull the intelligence of even the sharpest.

One might multiply examples of this kind, but in Europe

they are becoming well-known, and everyone is aware what such sham contracts are worth, in which the successful competitor is nominated beforehand, being naturally he that has promised the biggest *baksheesh* to the authorities, who (naturally also) will get the worst goods at his hands. Just so is it with concessions for mines or for public works; all is fictitious, laughable, false. The outside of Western honesty is copied, but only with a view to hide up the shameless bribery and corruption of Ottoman officials. The Turk thinks he has made a great step in imitating our printed forms, in copying the headings of deeds and contracts as they are framed in Europe, in aping all our formulæ. In fact, for him does not his administration become reduced to just a set of formulæ? Argal: if the administration be bad, change the form of it, and all will go well. It is the spirit which kills; it is the letter that makes alive. Nobody, however, is so silly as to believe that these surface-changes can do aught to better the mind or the morals or the temperament of Ottoman officials. It is the old story of the Turk who thinks he has turned into an apostle of progress, because he puts on a London-made coat or gets his stick-up collars straight from Paris.

Besides his perpetual itch to make money, the Turkish functionary hungers for another thing, for promotion, for place, for a grade. It must first be noted that as in the army so in the civil department, the same hierarchy obtains. These dignities, although independent of the functionary's office and bringing with them no emolument, are yet greatly coveted, for they raise the official socially and mark him off as a member of the true Turkish aristocracy.

The titles, or *rutbès*, are: *Salicè, Sanié, Miralai, Oula-Senf-Sani, Oula-Senf-Ervel, Bala and Vezir*. They correspond to the military grades of promotion from major to marshal. Upon these seven titles all the ambition of the Ottoman bureaucrat is centred. To decorations he gives little heed, for the very servants and valets of the palace can sport the *Osmanié*, while at Court receptions the breasts of eunuchs blaze like the sun at noon. Sultan Aziz used even to decorate his fighting cocks for their prowess. Ottomans thus, do not care to take the same level as cocks—or as capons; and they smile inwardly at the eagerness of Europeans to secure a Second Class or Fourth Class of the *Medjidieh*. But again, as regards promotion the case is different; to get one of the seven grades in question, a Turk will use all his cunning. He becomes on a sudden active, zealous, even laborious. Thirst for work is the first and most certain symptom of this disease. With feverish tenacity, he exaggerates his own merits and depreciates the worth of others. Sometimes he even goes to the length of writing lampoons; and, not content with being the servile toady of his superiors, he becomes the rabid reviler of his best friends.

In the Ottoman official world, *esprit de corps* is a thing unknown. There is no such thing as brotherhood, no such thing as solidarity. Every one for himself; and every man's hand is against his neighbour. Do your colleague a bad turn; for, depend upon it, when he gets a chance, he will be equally obliging.

See those two young fellows who go by, chatting cordially and calling each other "brother." Down the streets they walk with their little fingers linked, like a pair of rural

lovers ; such simple friendship reminds you of Orestes and of Pylades. Another disillusion ! there is not a tithe of truth or of candour between them ; falsehood is all. Orestes will go to his chief and tell him any secrets that he may have been able to worm out of his comrade, and, while repeating these, will put in black touches of his own. Pylades runs off to his patron to denounce his friend as a dangerous malcontent full of bitter words for the Government and of disrespect for his sovereign. Strangest thing of all ; each will know that night the ill which the other has said about him. But never think that the disclosure will lead to a quarrel or an estrangement. To-morrow, they will link their little fingers just as affectionately as before, calling each other by the same tender names. One thing there is of which the Turkish official world knows absolutely nothing ; and that is, dignity of character. Each man despises his colleague too much to be vexed at his base calumnies. Moreover, he despises himself ; and he knows that, if the chance came, he would prove just as contemptible as another.

Yonder functionary, wearing, one hardly knows why, a brilliant military uniform is the spy and private detective of the Chief. He goes from Department to Department, under pretence of chatting with this or that official. But in reality his work is to scrutinise the visitors who come to the different bureaux, to take note how long they stay, and how they look on leaving. His cleverness consists in piecing together such shreds of conversation as he may chance to pick up, and to make therefrom such deductions as shall serve him eventually. Then, back he goes to his patron and serves him up the *plat du jour* with an

appetising sauce of his own confection, sparing neither friend nor relative, in his haste to be spicy, not even his poor brother-in-law, to whom perhaps he owes all. Why he wears a uniform is thus easily conceivable ; it is simply a livery !

The real professional backbiter, again, plays the spy on two enemies at once, tarring on the one against the other and fanning the flame of their hate, so that, later, he may secure the post of the one through the good graces of the other.

It is impossible for a Frenchman or an Englishman who has gone through the mill, and who knows by experience all the painful intricacies of Ottoman official life, not to come out from it all disgusted and utterly sick at heart. And therefore, one can easily conceive why foreigners will never consent, not even for the most tempting offers, to renew their contracts with the Government.

By cruel lessons the official, yet green and enquiring, soon learns the truth of this double maxim in which all administrative life in Constantinople is summed up : "Trust no one or you will be betrayed !" "Always tell lies, otherwise nobody will believe you !" Lying is a malady of so endemic a nature that possibly a straightforward person might be the dupe of his own sincerity. One is obliged to festoon the truth and garland it in so pretty and pleasing a way as to hide it altogether. If you mean "a hundred," you must say "ten thousand ;" otherwise, your questioner, used to translate "ten thousand" by "a hundred," will think that you only mean "ten." Everything is in the superlative degree ; instead of adding, multiply ; that is the general rule and the whole syntax of this special language

Turkey is the home of the inexact sciences. When an Ottoman shows you a thing, reverse your opera-glass if you would get an idea of its just size.

Moreover, lying is an accomplishment by no means to be despised ; and, for telling him an untruth, no Chief would ever bear his subordinate any ill-will, though he might if he chose to be frank and speak out. Consequently, the subordinates must cheat rather than be disagreeable. The main point is to win his Chief's favour rather than his confidence. Some underlings will do all sorts of little jobs for their master, fetching and carrying, executing his commissions, flattering his vanity and his greediness. The least of these bureaucrats has the title of Excellency so soon as he obtains the rank of *oula*. Surely never was there such a firmament of Excellencies ! Knowing employees make the best and most efficacious use of this term as a salve and an emollient. Others, by frequent visits to their superiors, afford him solace in his official cares by telling him disgusting stories, by singing romances or by twangling the guitar. Some play the pander to his passion for Christian flesh, and pilot him to places where, by day as by night, one is ever sure of a friendly reception. Some even . . .

But, pleasing one of these influential personages will not suffice, one must side with him against his enemies. It is impossible to remain neutral or to maintain one's independence of character. As in old Rome, the subordinate must espouse his patron's cause and hate those whom he hates. Turkish society is thus broken up, divided into factions ; but not as in France, where religion or politics are the engines of division. In Turkey, men are separated by personal jealousy, by pride, by spite.

A singular hostility reigns between the Government authorities properly so called and the *personnel* of the Imperial Palace. The Palace counts as a privileged State—a sort of Empyrean floating above the nation's head. All those who draw breath in this Imperial ether, because they live near the sovereign, are notable for their overweening impertinence, and look down in lordly fashion upon other functionaries. The most influential of them all is the *Kisleri Agha*, the head eunuch and chief of the Imperial harem. He has the rank of Marshal of the Palace, and his credit is unlimited. After the Sultan, this gelding counts as the first person in the Empire; he stands above the law, and if so minded, may fearlessly box a recalcitrant Minister's ears. He goes by the pretty name of Europeanophagus or devourer of all that is European; and he poses as the rabid defender of Asiatic barbarism. Following his example, various palace functionaries have declared themselves independent and in no wise obliged to obey the Government of the country; they do all they can to thwart it, and make a vaunt of holding it in derision.

Most of these budget-weevils live on idly in fat laziness; their offices which they never fill are sinecures. Sometimes they assume queer titles which recall those of the Janissaries in bygone days—Head of the Scullions, Superintendent of the Sideboard, Head of the Forage and Provender Department, Director of the Aviary, and the like. Such are the posts they occupy, though these posts are very far from occupying them. Big and little, potent or puny, they are all filled with most insufferable arrogance, though verily in point of insolence the smaller fry bear off the palm. To get an idea of human impertinence, listen to a

Palace eunuch bullying one of his master's servants, and it will make you sad to reflect how base are both beings ; the one who has arrived at such a pitch of brutal insolence, the other who has fallen so low as to be powerless to reply.

One must not think that this world up at the Palace is a little world, consisting of a small group of limpet-like individuals. It is a legion living within the sacred precincts, thriving, fattening there, and enriching itself at Imperial expense and Imperial generosity. Each of these "Directors" and "Chiefs" has a dozen or more of servants under him, who in their turn have other domestics that obey their orders. Three thousand is the number of those persons who daily receive their mid-day *pilaf*; the cost of nourishing them exceeds, it is said, 60,000 francs per diem. At noon whole battalions of cooks file past carrying on their head broad platters on which are little saucepans. It is the courtiers' dinner going by! The number of chickens that are devoured would suffice to satisfy the most ravenous of armies.

But corporal nourishment is not enough to content these ogres ; each has always something to petition and to beg for himself, for his brother, for his cousin, or for his cousin's friend. And the sovereign, whose generosity knows no limits, always gives : to this one, a house ; to that one, an estate ; to a third, a snuff-box set in brilliants ; to a fourth, some gift on the occasion of a marriage or the birth of a child. Newly-appointed Ministers often receive a palace or a villa as a present, not to speak of lesser gifts in the shape of sabres with jewelled hilts, costly watches, etc. These brief facts are enough to show that the Palace is a gulf in which is swallowed up a greater part of the riches

of the country. Officially the Sultan is satisfied with a Civil List which does not exceed twenty-five millions of francs ; but to that must be added the revenues derived from the immense Crown property ; lands which include over twelve hundred farms, and the precise extent of which has never been accurately stated. Their rental alone is valued at twenty-two millions of francs. Besides, there are other revenues of various kinds ; and the sovereign, by virtue of the laws of Tanzimat or of Reform, always reserves the right to appropriate such and such State resource if he need it ; and moreover, he sets his Ministers a bad example by taking *baksheesh* himself ; sums which are valued collectively at sixteen millions of francs. Thus the Palace absorbs—devours sixty millions of francs annually !

To sum up : the Sultan is obliged to board and lodge part of the Mussulman population of Constantinople. Add to this the fact that he is personally charitable ; that when any public calamity visits the land, such as a famine or a fire, he gives largely, royally ; that if a village or a quarter be burnt down he rebuilds it partially, if not wholly, at his own cost ; that he gives money to the army, to the fleet, to the sick and infirm, to poor students, as well as supplying funds for the construction of hospitals, mosques and schools. All the Sultans have indeed had a mania for building. A European is astounded at the sight of so many huge palaces, of sober exterior, but most marvellously decorated within. Deserted monuments, these ; forsaken, ill-kept and falling to ruin ; created by the caprice of a moment, but a caprice that lasted rarely as long, and never longer than the life of him who had it. On either side the Bosphorus banks such white gleaming *kiosques* are to be seen ; an unromantic

lady once compared them, not unhappily, to wedding-cakes. Go inland through the provinces; everywhere you will see Imperial residences, but, like those on the Bosphorus, all deserted, decayed. Nothing more mournful meets the eye than these splendid edifices slowly rotting on lonely plains; one is reminded of the precious vestiges of civilisation on which explorers light in Assyria and Upper Egypt. In every city of the Empire there is a *kiosque* set apart for the Sultan, which he never inhabits. Truly prodigal is the luxury which marks these palatial abodes; rare marbles, rich and costly woods, enamel in silver and in gold, mirrors and lustres from Venice, mosaics from Florence and Rome; choice furniture, the best samples of buhl and marqueterie work, with deep-hued carpets, soft, velvety as fur. These magnificent abodes are nominally guarded by majordomos who live there with their families in comfortable drowsiness and ease. How many hundreds of millions of francs have thus been squandered which might have been usefully spent in making roads, in fertilising valleys, in cutting canals, in constructing ports!

Each denizen of this world at Yildiz has one pre-occupation, and that naturally is how best to maintain his place by trying to give proofs of zeal and usefulness. Courtiers high and low all try to get into their master's good books, and win his confidence by perpetually hinting at the insecurity of his position. They pretend to be mainly anxious to defend their sovereign, but in reality they want to defend their own place, and to stick fast to that. They raise up between the Padishah and his people an insurmountable barrier; and it is their policy to maintain this isolation, traditional indeed to Eastern monarchs, for in

olden times, ambassadors were only suffered to see the Sultan through a gilded grating.

All these Court men devote what wits and what imagination they have to inventing new causes for fear, ever preparing false rumours of plots, of assassinations, of conspiracies. The greatest statesmen, the worthiest and most honest servants of the Empire cannot come off unscathed from such pestilent calumnies, that are always muttered hypocritically with bated breath—negative slanders such as: “That Pasha is getting far too powerful?” “This one talks overloud and wears a dangerously determined air!” “That other is always in Pera, and associates too frequently with Europeans; *without special authorisation*, he attends Ambassadors’ balls!” “Such an one gets journals from Paris, the dreadful hot-bed of Socialism!” and so on. By continual scares of this kind, the path to progress is barred and the sovereign in such an atmosphere of terror and alarm is, as it were, morally paralysed, and hindered from carrying out his good intentions.

For several years past the Sultan has not dared to leave the *enceinte* of his palace at Yildiz. Not only does he never visit any city of his Empire, but he fears to show himself at Stamboul or on the Bosphorus. His officious counsellors paint these places for him as so many dreadful gins and pitfalls, full of bombs and of dynamite. By a religious law the Head of the State is obliged every Friday—the Moslem Sabbath—to attend public prayer at one of the mosques; and this weekly ceremony of the Selamlik was once celebrated at Stamboul with great pomp and splendour. Now, the Sultan Abdul-Hamid goes occasionally to the Beshiktash mosque at the base of Yildiz Hill, but more frequently, in

fact, as a rule, to the Hamidié mosque, named after his Imperial Majesty, a brand new edifice of white marble built by the sovereign for convenience' (some say for safety's) sake, on the crest of the slope, just outside his palace gates.

The brief route from the Palace to the mosque, is closely guarded by troops; and not one person in the curious crowd of spectators can possibly approach within killing length. Dignified, imposing as is the spectacle, it yet forces upon one the conviction that the Padishah, the Noble Commander of the Faithful is voluntarily as great a prisoner at Constantinople as is His Holiness the Pope in Rome.

Yildiz Palace in truth is almost a fortress in itself. Poised on the high ground above Pera, at considerable distance from Stamboul, its massive walls environ a regular park into which no one may ever penetrate. Vast barracks surround it, and at a moment's notice the Sultan could find himself hedged round by an army. Roads across the park lead down to the Bosphorus, where, off Dolma Baghtché, two Imperial yachts lie always at anchor; one of them has her steam up always, whether it be night or day.

Spies in shoals patrol the city, lurking in public places and worming their way into families, whom by one lying phrase they often manage to ruin. Some of these Palace *mouchards* are familiar figures; and in the restaurant or the *Bierhalle* on seeing them, people point the finger and drop their voice simultaneously. But most of them are disguised so that, meeting them, you know them not, nor whether, evilly, they may wrench your lightest and most harmless word from its meaning, and give to it a suspicious

sense ! So it comes that in public, men talk always of trivial matters, and conversation becomes dry, lifeless, without any touch of individuality, of personal feeling about it.

Fear of plots has led to precautions that are positively incredible. The importation of all explosive and inflammable matter is strictly prohibited. At no cost whatever can engineers procure dynamite with which to carry on their operations ; agriculturists dare not purchase sulphate of carbon, though it would save their vines from the ravages of the phylloxera. Even to regiments, no blank cartridges are served out when on drill. Occasionally the sale of fireworks is forbidden ; the experiments with electric light have been suspended ; telephones are also under the ban. It has never been possible to establish telegraphic communication between the Tower of Galata, where are stationed the watchers who signal fires, and the head-quarters of the local fire-brigade at Taxim, which is at the other end of the town. And so runners, barefoot and dressed in red rags, have to carry the news across the whole length of Pera and first send the firemen to their work.

Another fact more curious still ; a fact that borders on buffoonery. The local post has been suppressed ! Why ? Because certain droll fellows took it into their head to write comic letters to the Sultan and to the Grand Vizier. Immediately like a thunderbolt comes the decree ; from head-quarters the local post is struck dead by it—is abolished ! The red letter-boxes with their white crescent still sadly cling to walls at many a street-corner, and the pretty new stamps serve to enrich the album of the assiduous collector. To-day, throughout the whole of

Constantinople and its suburbs it is impossible to communicate with anyone by stamped, directed letter. You must send a friend or your servant ; and if you have not either of these commodities, you must go yourself, perhaps hire a horse and certainly lose half-a-day. What a charming aid is this to commerce !

Such are some of the lamentable results of the work of rapacious Court hangers-on and parasites who only try to terrify their sovereign and poison his peace of mind. It may well be that the tragic fate of his predecessors inclines the Sultan to melancholy and sad thoughts ; but the fact is noteworthy that all revolutions have had their birth in the palace itself, among the relatives or the courtiers of the sovereign. No people is more devoted, more trusting, more patient or more reverent than the Turkish nation. Did the Padishah summon them, in a moment a hundred thousand breasts were bared to defend his own. And yet against a people such as this he raises up every possible entrenchment ; and he looks for safety in the centre of his most dangerous foes. That is why Turkey resembles a flock without a shepherd. Sovereign and people live too far apart ; they are severed by a massive immovable line of courtiers who from the sovereign's hand take the money that by right belongs to the people.

In all these lavish expressions of fidelity the Sultan, however, would appear to put but slender trust. Except at Selamlık, he rarely shows himself to the Palace crew ; he lives in seclusion in his apartments, surrounded by certain officers personally attached to him, and upon whose loyalty and devotion he can count. As to the others, he boards and lodges them ; for, failing that, they might eat

him up. He lives in perpetual fear of poison ; and expert chemists are specially told off to analyse his food. Poison, indeed, has ever been a common method for getting rid of disagreeable Sultans ; so on this score he has every reason to be afraid. To make sure of the faithfulness of all his protectors he refuses none of their requests, but heaps favours and kindness upon them. Alas ! devotion which is bought has never the worth of that which is freely given, which "is all for love and nothing for reward."

Such is the troubled, sad existence of the Padishah. It would verily need a Colbert, honest, blunt, and brutal to make a clean sweep of all these useless Palace vermin, and let the money now squandered upon them be put to a patriotic use. Alas ! in Europe, Colberts are extinct ; in Turkey they would be assassinated, and that right soon.

CHAPTER V.

THE INTERIOR OF A GOVERNMENT OFFICE.—PROFILE OF A MINISTER.—ETERNAL VACATIONS.—THE ART OF OBTAINING CONCESSIONS AND OF NOT PROFITING BY THEM.

TO MAKE a minute anatomical study of a Turkish Government office, one must get inside that rotten hulk called a Ministry, and examine its rickety, tumble-down state within. So, for this purpose let us proceed to Stamboul, climbing the narrow, dirty, break-neck streets which lead up to the hill on which the Seraskierate or War Office stands; and there we shall be face to face with one of those heavy, massive buildings that are copies (and bad copies, too), of European barracks.

In the court-yard surges a clamorous crowd of Turkish women, all pushing, shouting, gesticulating before a grating, at which the face of an imperturbable clerk appears. Those not in the front row tie their petitions or documents to the tips of their umbrellas, and push them under the nose of the imperturbable clerk, or else wave them frantically in the air, while such ladies as are strongest of limb

and of nerve try to break through the motley throng, amid much cackling and many screams. Most of these poor women are widows and daughters of officials who come to get the miserable pension awarded to them by the State. How many weary hours are theirs of waiting, and how often they come and yet return and come again, Allah only knows! Some squat stoically in a corner of the court-yard; and seeing them thus huddled together with their chin upon their knees, one is convinced that no woman takes up so little room upon earth as a Turkish woman. Others smoke cigarettes to while away the time, or drink water which they draw from an adjacent well. Some bring their babies with them and rock them in an impromptu cradle made by a shawl slung to a bush. All of them wail and lament indignantly, showing to each other the papers they hold, with the Imperial cypher and an infinity of *muhurs* or stamps upon it.

Let us pass through this circle of unfortunates and go into the building itself. At the foot of the staircase we find an apartment where shoes and goloshes are left. In Europe the impression still obtains that this habit, in the East, of taking off one's shoes on entering a mosque is due to a religious motive. Nothing of the kind; it is simply done for cleanliness' sake. Dust lies a foot thick in the streets in summer, and in winter the rich black mud is more than half a metre in depth, so that Turks have to wear over-shoes, or double shoes, goloshes, in fact, which not only outside every mosque but at the threshold of every decently furnished house they are obliged to leave. There is all the more reason for this as the floors on which they walk are usually covered with handsome carpets and rugs.

Unfortunately Ottomans of the lower class have not the means of buying these overshoes, and so they merely take off the sort of leather cases which serve as boots, and, sockless, go into mosque or ministerial mansion barefoot and unashamed. Let us hasten to add that owing to the frequent ablutions prescribed by the Coran, the state of these corporal extremities leaves rarely aught to be desired. Many Turks in Constantinople wear boots of the European sort with elastic sides, but they still persist in taking them off when in a house or on board a Bosphorus steamer, sitting undiscomfited in their socks. Indeed this is the Oriental's invariable habit—a manœuvre performed in three successive movements. Movement one: off boots and on to sofa; movement two: draw up feet on to divan and cross legs; movement three: open tobacco box and begin to roll cigarette. A pleasant type of this ceremony I once saw at a public school on prize-day. The Government functionary who presided had placed his boots in front of him on the platform. These poor boots were already past their first youth; the lappets of their ears hung shyly, timidly down; they seemed to blush before the brilliant assembly; like certain Ministers, they seemed to be wholly wanting in prestige. Before embarking upon his speech, the president put on his shabby boots again; for him that was as good as sipping the traditional glass of water to clear his throat. But let us have done with externals, nor let us longer dally with boots outside the door. Here is the ante-chamber; we will enter it.

Squatting in line along its walls, are petitioners, all with a grievance, who have come some fifty times or more to claim money due them by the Government. There they sit

for four or five hours at a stretch, occasionally drinking coffee or water which last is served out to them by an itinerant seller who carries a huge wickerwork jar. And when closing-time comes, these luckless persons file out into the street with a resigned air, determined to return on the morrow. Sometimes as they depart, a clerk whispers to them encouragingly: "Your business is being looked into, so come back again in a few days."

Here you may see Government contractors who for five or six months have been waiting to have their accounts settled; journeymen whose weekly pay has been abruptly stopped, and of which they vainly hope to get at least a fraction; and many another victim of official dishonesty and extortion. Merely to contemplate the patience and humility of these petitioners makes one convinced that they will go straight to heaven; and is not that a consoling thought?

They go and they come back, some of them twenty, others sixty times, without ever growing weary or desperate. And they are right; for experience has taught them that Turkish officials never busy themselves about a matter save just in that moment when the person interested puts it before them. Bureaucracy cannot walk by itself; it must be pushed along; it is like a toy watch devoid of mechanism, the hands of which must be turned round with the finger.

These ranks of resigned applicants are swelled by numerous beggars, all ragged and ready to exhibit their hideous sores. In one corner a dirty, shockheaded dervish with hairy chest glares at you out of his wild eyes; liquor-sellers stroll about in groups; while gambolling babies laugh and cry at will on the staircase. A functionary of high position passes,

when everybody rises ; some bolder applicant makes a faint attempt to speak to him, but then feebly subsides upon his haunches, gives a twitch to his bead necklace, and prefers to rest and be thankful.

Lift up, now, the heavy curtain which hides the door of one of these bureaux, and let us indiscreetly take a peep at the inside. On large arm chairs covered with Aleppo silk some ten or twelve employés sit in a doubled-up position. The seats are all rubbed to shabbiness by the constant friction of boots and shoes ; in fact, the stuffing peers out in places. Before each person there is a small table which—forgive the simile—resembles a night-stool ; on this are ink and pens, besides two or three tiny trays for cigarette-ash.

Some of the employés are writing with a reed pen, (*galèm*) skilfully tracing those pretty Turkish or rather Arabic characters which look for all the world like garlands. The sheet of paper is placed in the palm of their left hand, for it is not customary to write upon a table. Now and again the copyist pauses to admire as a dilettante should, the half line which his genius has just given to the world. His colleagues remain silent ; inert, they do not talk, they do not laugh, they do not read. Plunged in their *kef* (a Turkish expression for lazy ease) they twiddle their chaplet which Orientals invariably carry in their hand as a pastime and toy. They never look at a book, a pamphlet, a newspaper. Twice during the afternoon coffee is brought to them ; and from time to time they call for a glass of water ; this is the only sign they ever give of vitality.

In the office of a Chief of Department, the scene changes. Visitors enter without being announced ; they salute, sit

down, salute again, accept a cigarette, take coffee in a little porcelain cup without a handle which stands in an egg-shaped socket of filigree work called *zarf*. This done, they subside upon the sofa in a comatose state. The wretched functionary has never an instant for reflection or for making advance in the work on hand. Beggars file past him at every moment; itinerant sellers of pens, of ink, of cigarette-holders, of matches. On one chair a mangy cat is feeding its kittens; fleas cut their capers on all the carpets; while the common or household bug makes daring ascents up tables or divans, and even ventures to scale the dizzy heights of the official desks.

All at once from an ante-chamber, the chanting of a *muezzin* calls the faithful to prayer, when some of the clerks hasten to a room set apart for devotional purposes, the floor of it being covered with a carpet, on which they may kneel and prostrate themselves. Often, in the middle of a Cabinet Council, one or two members present will quit their armchair, and in a corner of the room, unroll their prayer-carpet and begin their genuflexions, the discussion continuing meanwhile.

At other times a madman will enter the Council Chamber and yell at its inmates, but no one loses for that an inch of his wonted gravity. A servant endeavours to remove the poor maniac by arguments and soft persuasion, never by force, for the Mussulmans have a superstitious respect for lunatics, believing them inspired from above. I am convinced that some cracked people make capital out of this, for I have noticed that the acuter symptoms of insanity rapidly disappeared on the administration of a remedy in the form of a few ten-franc pieces.

As will be seen, working days at Government Offices are not very numerous. Friday is the Turkish Sunday, when all the Public Offices are closed, on Saturday the Jews have their weekly day of rest, when some of the Banks and most of the big financial houses are not open; and Government offices do little or nothing. On Sunday they keep holiday again, for all Armenians and Greeks, remain at home. On Wednesday, there is a Cabinet Council at the Sublime Porte, and employés never come to their offices on that day. So only Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and a part of Saturday remain as working days, and, on Monday, matters do not make great progress, for it is difficult to set to work after three consecutive days of sweet sloth! Besides these holidays, there are Turkish festivals and eves of festivals; the Ramazan, the Baïram, the Courban-Baïram, the Anniversaries of the Sultan's birth and accession, the Armenian and Greek feast-days, etc., etc.

Much abuse has been levelled at the *cartons verts* used by French authorities, but what are they by the side of the enormous boxes which stand in Turkish Ministerial lobbies, covered with cowhide and studded with huge copper nails. In these are preserved all Ottoman official documents that are packed away there in fine disorder. A Levantine of caustic tongue said once to me: "You see that the Turks are always thinking of their forthcoming fitting; they have already packed up their archives."

We have just examined the material conditions of Turkish bureaucracy; now let us endeavour to define the spirit of it. What little we have said was with a view to point out their blind adherence to a fossil routine, and their adaman-

tine resistance to all Western ideas. They fight shy of the European because they are afraid of work; every step forward needs an effort, so they say, "For heaven's sake let there be no progress, so that we may remain tranquil!"

What firm will and what patience are needed by the unlucky concessionist who has at last formulated his demand for a concession, and seeks to obtain the Imperial firman! How many resolute competitors have not repented their rashness in starting upon so ill-starred an enterprise! Some, disgusted, have abruptly broken off all their negotiations; others, unwilling to sacrifice the heavy sums already spent in preparing the way to success, linger on, hoping against hope. Six or seven years of chagrin and suspense are often wasted in this way; and the concessionist may count himself lucky if the Government do not basely put into the contract some apocryphal clause of such insidious a nature as practically to ruin the whole enterprise.

From all the many examples of this, let us choose that of M. Moutran, who for many years past has solicited the permission to construct quays along the Golden Horn. For Constantinople this would prove a source of wealth, and help greatly to make the city healthier. All steamers and merchant vessels have to anchor in mid-stream; they cannot approach a wharf, for none exists; and passengers or goods have to be transferred to land in boats and barges. When once goods are brought on shore, they have to be carried by *hamals* (the street porters), or else brought in little rickety bullock-carts to their destination. Things could have been no worse than this in the fifteenth century. In this respect Constantinople is four centuries behind Smyrna and Alexandria. Well, to obtain the concession

for these quays, M Moutran (who has already furnished Turkey with excellent light-houses) had to spend more than half a million of francs ; but without any result. Apropos of this, the following pretty story was told.

Some years ago, as the festival of Baïram drew near, there was absolutely no money in the Treasury ! How terribly embarrassing ! For this is a time for merry-making and rejoicing with high and low, both in public and in private. It is like the Giaour's Christmastide, when gifts and visits are exchanged. Sweetmeats and sugar are then freely distributed, so that the festival has come to be styled *Cheker Baïram* or the Sugar Feast. For four days guns are fired ; vessels in harbour are gay with flags ; there are official receptions and brilliant illuminations. But foremost above all other pleasant surprises, are the money presents which His Imperial Majesty, the Sultan, distributes among his faithful subjects, to officers, to functionaries, and others. All the soldiers of the Constantinople garrison (and it is a very large one) are invited in batches, during Ramazan, to dine at the Palace, and each receives a gift of money. For a whole month, then, the Sovereign entertains from six hundred to seven hundred persons every evening ; and the bill thus run up is no trifling one.

That year it so happened that there was no money ; and so there could be no fêtes. The Baïram looked as though it would be a most melancholy festival. What a bad impression such impecuniosity would make upon the people and upon the army ! Then the authorities thought of M. Moutran and his famous concession. In exchange for a loan, the Government agreed to grant it to him. Proposals were made, but so much time was spent in negotiating, that the

Baïram drew near before anything was settled. At the last moment the Turkish authorities made up their mind; late on the eve of the festival the firman of concession was awarded to M. Moutran, who gave a glance at the precious, long coveted document and signed a cheque for the sum agreed upon. The treasury messengers at once rushed off to the Imperial Ottoman Bank, roused the cashier and by virtue of the magical name of the Sultan, got him to cash the cheque. On waking next morning M. Moutran looked closer at the firman of concession. He saw that the first part of the document was in accordance with his proposals, but that into the main part of it certain modifications had been cunningly introduced which rendered it practically invalid. Furious at this, he hastened to the Grand Vizier, tore up the firman, and with a wrath quite European did not hesitate to give him a piece of his mind. Happily by virtue of his previous concession he was entitled to receive the lighthouse revenues; and so in this way he managed to recover the sum thus—borrowed!

It would take us over long to recount the sad history of concessions; suffice it to say that the Ottoman Government only cares to grant concessions of a diplomatic kind. Turkey gets her coal from England and her petroleum from Russia and America. Yet though she possesses both coal and petroleum in abundance, she can never decide to profit by them. Near Heraclea there is a coal mine of some 120 to 130 kilometres in length from west to east, and 10 kilometres in breadth. In certain places the coal stratum is four metres thick. For several years past European companies have striven to obtain the right of exploitation

of this rich mine, but all their money and energy spent have been wasted ; Turkey continues to buy her coal from Cardiff and Newcastle.

As we are speaking of England, *apropos* of this envious nation it seems fitting here to make certain reservations in favour of Turkey, so that we may not be charged with injustice or prejudice as regards the Ottoman Government. One must admit that many improvements in the transport service and in the construction of seaports would have been made, if the rivalry of European States, and above all, the insufferable egoism of England, had not created such heavy obstacles. It is Great Britain who has always prevented the construction of the great railway from Constantinople to Bagdad and to the Persian Gulf. It may be urged that if these obstacles had not existed, Turkey would probably have carried out none of the fine schemes that she cherished. That is very likely ; but in any case she has now the excuse of saying that she is not mistress in her own house. The Great Powers treat her, not as a nation, but as a question. Every time she tries to move, there is growling in some part of Europe. England, above all, whose capacity for exploiting unscrupulously and ungenerously the peoples under her sway, jealously watches each movement of Turkey, and would prefer to render her paralytic rather than to see her take a step which should profit another rival nation. Financiers have often specified to the Turkish Government such imported articles as ought properly to be made liable to duty, this proving a considerable source of revenue to the impoverished treasury. But even there the Porte is not free to act ; it is bound down by treaties which forbid it

not to work its own ruin. England often waxes tender over "The Sick Man," but yet she is careful to keep the patient in a state of anemia from which she draws profit.

After these few lines in defence of poor Turkey, let us round upon her once more and reproach her for thwarting and tormenting her wretched concessionists. Were an inquiry instituted, the list of complaints made by these latter would be well-nigh interminable, while some of the pretexts put forward by the Ottoman officials would indeed create amusement.

The Dercos Water Company, which supplies Constantinople with water, tried to lay down a line of rail from Dercos Lake to a neighbouring port; but the Government always refused to permit this, upon the grounds that it was a railway, and that all the necessary formulæ for the construction of a large railway must be gone through!

At Panderma a French company asked for permission to establish at its own cost a steamboat service between the mouth of a river and the mines which it was working. It could not, however, obtain such authorisation, though no reasons for this obstinate refusal were vouchsafed by the Porte. Hundreds of enterprises have thus collapsed owing to the obstinacy and pigheadedness of the authorities. As regards mining, a company may count itself lucky if the mine in question be situated near the seaboard; in the interior, exportation becomes positively ruinous, owing to lack of means of communication. The roads and paths are utterly impracticable for carriages or carts; all must be carried by camels, horses or mules, and these beasts can

only bear about a fifth or sixth part of an ordinary load. This question of means of transport, a vital one for agriculture, is no less so for industry. The needful money for road-making has often been exacted from ratepayers and it has as often been paid. What, then, has become of it? It has disappeared by infiltration, leaving behind it no trace.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE TURKISH SOLDIER.—HIS VIRTUES ARE HIS OWN ; HIS FAULTS HE GETS FROM HIS SUPERIORS.—THE GERMAN PASHAS.—HEROES IN TATTERS.

IF the Turk as a functionary be detestable, he is, on the other hand, an excellent soldier. Islamism may count indeed as the type of the church militant. On Fridays in the mosques the *imam* reads the Coran with a drawn sword in his hand. War, for the believer, is an act of faith ; it lighted the enthusiasm of the ancient martyrs.

Conscription exclusively touches the agricultural class, the best one of the whole nation. Moreover, the Turkish private presents a blending of qualities such as no European soldier possesses in the same degree. First and foremost, he is astonishingly sober ; he never touches wine or spirits ; a handful of rice or a crust of black bread with a little mutton, for beef is not eaten, form his sole food. Fatigue, cold, heat, poverty, he is proof against all ; being always resigned if death should come, his courage is dauntless. Patriotism, or, if you will, fanaticism of the most ardent

kind inspires him, sustains him and ever holds before him the picture of a paradise where eternal ecstasies shall be his, after all the miseries of this earthly life. It is curious that Christians should have imagined a material hell, with boilers, furnaces and a whole assortment of instruments of torture; their paradise, however, is a purely abstract conception. Mussulmans, on the other hand, are temperate in giving details as to the punishments in store for sinners, while they have invented an empyrean abode of the most sensual sort. For them, the bliss of the elect is one eternal spasm.

How often in the last war was not the Turkish soldier forced to march fasting all day long, either because of Ramazan or because of the negligence of contractors, who, while amassing fortunes, suffered the army to starve! The poor soldier, broken in spirit by want of food and having no wrap or blanket to defend him from the bitter cold of a winter in the Balkans, yet fought for days together, unflaggingly and without a murmur. He knew that he was dying for his Sultan and his religion; in that lay his heroism.

Though naïve and ignorant, the Turkish soldier is not unintelligent, above all things he is stimulated by a sincere wish to learn his trade. Many a time in an angle of the Seraskierate court-yard we have watched raw recruits going through their musket drill by themselves, one giving the word of command and the other obeying it. Think that this is in Turkey, in the classic land of laziness and indifference; and then say if such zeal be not admirable!

The Turkish soldier is well-disciplined, docile, respectful and easily led. He is an excellent instrument which the

native officers are incapable of putting to its effective use. All his merits are his own, inherent to himself ; his defects come to him from without, from bad administration, from the gross negligence of his superiors.

For instance, strip off his uniform and you will find him a veritable savage. Look at the bands of recruits which at certain times in the year arrive at the capital in their national costume, and you will soon perceive that despite the European cut of tunic and trousers, and despite all Prussian military science, the Turkish army is but a modern form of the famous hordes of Ghengis-Khan. During a campaign, the soldiers are ferocious barbarians armed with the last new rifle, who ruthlessly slash and behead their wounded and dying foes who lie about the battle-field. A foreigner, for the Turk, is always a heretic ; it is every good Mussulman's duty to help in exterminating the whole race. One is reminded of the *fakirs* of yore who when returning from their pilgrimage to Mecca armed themselves with *khandjars* dipped in poison and swore to wound all Christians whom they might chance to meet. This way of being agreeable to the Lord is no longer tolerated now-a-days ; but the idea still exists in all minds, the idea which gave to Oriental wars all their ferocious, bloody character. The fanatical soldier is capable of any monstrous act of cruelty ; witness the so-called " Bulgarian atrocities " over which there was such a scream in Europe. Mussulmans hide their hate and horror of Giaours under a veil of tolerance, but these passions are roused and revived on the day of battle. At the time when sedition among Greeks and Armenians had to be repressed, the acts of horrible cruelty surpassed belief ; whole populations were

massacred ; unheard of tortures were devised with that fertility of imagination peculiar to Asiatics.

Flattered by the Sultan, who has need of him, and encouraged by the *ulemas* who see in him the last support of Moslem fanaticism, the Turkish soldier shows an insolent disdain for foreigners, very different from the bland courtesy of Ottoman officials. In Stamboul and in Pera the soldier delights to make the European give place to him in the street, and will often push him off the pavement into the mud ; while, if a lady be with her husband or brother, she forms the subject of indecent remarks, which happily she does not understand. When a European girl passes before the guardhouse of a Turkish barrack she is almost certain to be hailed by licentious words and gestures. If in time of peace such things occur in the most civilised city of Turkey, imagine what happens when a town is taken by storm and when the soldier may give rein to his brutal lust !

Even towards his compatriots the soldier shows a sullen haughtiness. The inhabitant of Stamboul since the last disastrous wars may have learnt a little modesty, but the soldier has kept all his stubborn pride of race. In his blind ignorance he still believes that all the sovereigns of the earth are vassals of his Padishah. A legend still widely believed tells how a certain Sultan once shut up in the castle of Seven Towers kings and emperors of all nations. After a while in a sudden fit of generosity he sent them back to their respective countries ; but, in order to distinguish them, he had them dressed each in a different costume, which was at once adopted by each nation, who thus received back their ruler and made his dress their model

until the present day. In this way Mussulmans explain the variety in dress of the different nations of the globe. We would only ask them if their ingenious Sultan may also be held responsible for the short frocks and masher collars of modern male and female swells !

Be it noted that the defects here instanced of the Turkish private in no way detract from his merits as a soldier. On the contrary, fanaticism, cruelty and pride of race are resources that in war time cannot be too highly prized. They greatly helped to swell the military power and might of the Osmanlis ; but that was long ago. To-day, they only surprise and disgust, for they are signs of ignorance rather than of real force.

The Government has made considerable sacrifices for its army, it being a constant source of pre-occupation. The military budget absorbs a great part of the country's resources. The method of armament has undergone great improvement ; and the Turkish soldier has now an excellent repeating rifle, the Snyder. Germany, by the way, has just done a good stroke of business by selling to Turkey a part of its old stock of Mauser rifles, just as previously it sold to the same buyer six of its second-hand torpedo boats. Krupp furnishes the artillery department with its guns and ammunition, while all regulations and theories are precisely those of the German army. The cavalry is splendidly mounted, thanks to the immense purchases of horses made by the War Office in Hungary. The Turks are excellent horsemen ; and wonderful is the way they manage their mounts, often riding these without a saddle.

How comes it, then, that with such remarkable virtues, the Turkish army is still so faulty in the field ? Because it

is so badly officered. The Turkish officer is ignorant and lazy: what is more, he is so badly paid as to be almost reduced to poverty. This daily fight with penury uses up all his zeal and ambition. The rates of pay are most unequal. A *muchir*, or marshal, gets 1700 francs a month; a *liva*, or general of brigade, gets 2000 francs. On the other hand, a *yuz bashi*, or captain, hardly receives 80 francs, and a lieutenant, 50 francs, besides certain articles of uniform. Such sums are always irregularly paid. Most of the officers are married, and have their own little home where they take refuge and neglect their profession, which only brings them trouble and bitterness. Here lies the secret of the Turkish army's weakness, in a day when the worth of an army depends mainly upon the efficiency of the staff officers who direct it.

The Ottoman officer is brave; he will let himself be killed and never yield a step. He is almost as great a fanatic as the private soldier. In 1886 we remember to have heard certain officers speak exultingly in favour of the Holy War; and this is what it is. The Sultan goes in state to the old Seraglio, where are the holy relics of the Prophet, and brings forth Mahomet's Green Standard, just as of yore French kings brought out and waved the oriflamme before their people. The Holy War is thus declared. Every Mussulman, according to a religious law, must strangle his wife and children, burn his house, and destroy everything which might link him to life. It is a war for the desperate, who go out to battle never to return, and who walk forth to death with hate and rage in their heart, having but one thought, to slay as many of their foes as they can before being killed themselves.

Turkey is at this pitch, still, while Europe comfortably entertains all sorts of grand philanthropic ideas for the conversion of the heathen abroad, forgetting that the untamed barbarian lies at her very door.

To strengthen her staff officers, Turkey has applied to Germany for some of her best men. Since 1870 the German Empire stands first in Europe as regards military prestige, and the armies of all the Powers have now tried to copy, whether rightly or wrongly, the Prussian army system. The German Government was not slow to profit by the chance of getting a foothold in so important a strategic position, over which European diplomacy for centuries has wrangled. So officers *d'élite* were promptly placed at the service of the Ottoman Government, the most celebrated of whom is Baron von der Goltz Pasha, well-known in Europe by his excellent military works. These generals are all paid so largely and so regularly as to amaze and irritate their Turkish brother officers. Gifts, decorations and flattery are lavished upon them ; and if one of them should show the faintest inclination to return to his *Vaterland*, at once his salary is doubled he gets another grander decoration ; his wife and daughter are also decorated ; for the Turkish Government most gallantly provides a decoration for ladies, the Order of the Chefakat. Seemingly, then, Turkey has put the well-being of her army into the hands of German teachers, but, in a thoroughly Ottoman spirit of contrariety, she only cares to listen to them, while always persevering in her old system. The task of these generals, brilliant though it appear, is not freed from disillusion or disappointment. The German, to do him justice, is conscientious, painstaking, and an energetic worker ; it vexes him to remain inactive, and to

see that he cannot properly fulfil the mission which he has accepted. More than once Von der Goltz Pasha was for resigning his command ; and though the Turks held out golden offers, these would not tempt him ; upon a character of that stamp, money had little influence. So then promises in plenty were made that the programme laid down by His Excellency should be faithfully followed ; but of course these promises melted into thin air, and it needed an official order from Berlin to keep the chafing general at his post. A sceptical Turk once wittily remarked to one of these Pashas : "Why does Your Excellency complain ? You get your pay and heaps of attention ; only one thing is asked of you—namely, to do nothing. Go to the brasserie ; drink your beer ; and never thus trouble the peace of your conscience !"

The Government only permits regiments to fire with blank cartridge. Only think ! The palace parasites never would permit ball-cartridges to be recklessly distributed among soldiers, for who knows to what dangerous use they might not put them ? It is fortunate indeed that they have left the army its Snyder rifles, not replacing these by guns of zinc with tin bayonets. The soldier thus goes into action having never in his life fired a rifle. In order to teach him how to aim, a German officer has invented a little apparatus, a kind of sight to be placed on the barrel, which enables the instructor to control the firer's aim and to discover if he can judge distances correctly. For the artillery a similar system more tiresome yet prevails. Before going into battle the Turkish gunner has never fired a bombshell or an obus. These facts may give one some idea of the difficulties which meet the German Pashas in their task of army instruction.

With such miserable pay as he gets, the Turkish soldier is often in tatters, his boots are split open and the toes stick out of them, his trousers and tunic are faded, shabby, torn and buttonless, his sword is rusty and bent. The uniforms of officers leave also much to be desired, though German influence has helped greatly to correct slovenliness in this respect. Young lieutenants dress like the Prussians as nearly as they can, wearing a close-fitting tunic with double row of buttons, semi-tight trousers and plain stripe in red or gold crosswise on the cuffs.

On Fridays, for Selamlık, the soldier makes himself as smart as possible to escort his sovereign to the mosque. Then all the uniforms are irreproachable and the regiments have a very spick and span appearance. Let us specially mention the famous negro regiment which is in Zouave dress with turbans; negroes indeed that are more white than black, though the sappers that march at their head with large leather aprons and burnished axes look like real statues of bronze. The silken standards, richly embroidered in silver, glitter above the flashing bayonets, while the sturdy cavalrymen ride past in their Kalpaks to the crash of trumpets. The Turks have now no cavalry band, but have replaced this by cornets-à-piston. They have also done away with drummers for which the French have such an affection; and they have no regiment of cuirassiers. German influence has brought about all these changes.

A detail which surprises Europeans is that a sentry when on guard always has a companion sitting beside him with whom he can chat. They always mount guard in pairs. This is also done in the gendarmery and the police. If the sun be too hot, they leave their post and stand on the other

side of the street in the shade, a neighbouring *cafedji* willingly brings them each a stool, and so the hours on guard are wiled away in a sweet reverie. It is needless to explain why there are no *cantinières* in Mussulman regiments; they are replaced by *soujis* or water-sellers, who will render the utmost service if called upon to do so.

To resume: despite the want of good officers and the defects in the system of military instruction, the Turkish army, by reason of its courage, its devotion and its enthusiasm, is a formidable one. It would assuredly fight doggedly and to the very death. If military science be wanting to it, everybody from field marshal to private would do his duty, and vanquish or fall together, being animated by the same sentiments and ideas. There is neither hesitation, nor those divisions that result from diversity of religious or political opinion.

For the Ottoman army, perhaps the time of conquest has passed because of its intellectual inferiority; but it can still resist its foes gloriously; and from its despair, if vanquished, its victorious foes will assuredly have much to fear.

CHAPTER VII.

MYSTERIES OF THE HAREM.—A TURKISH FAMILY.—OTTOMAN CIVILITY AND OTTOMAN COOKERY.—A PLEA FOR EUNUCHS.

HITHERTO we have made a study of the Turk in public life—as priest, as magistrate, as functionary, as soldier. We are now going to visit him at home, and cross the threshold of those dwellings which for Europeans are wrapped in mystery. Our indiscreet glance shall even penetrate into the harem and view its secrets.

Every Turkish house is divided into two distinct parts:—the *selamlık* for men, and the *haremlık* for women. It is a bisexual abode. The *selamlık* consists of one or more rooms where the master of the house receives his friends his visitors or his creditors. That is the male side of the house. The harem is joined to the *selamlık* by a long passage closed by a door, “the door of felicity” through which no profane foot of male may pass. If your imagination be vivid enough, you can suppose that behind this door stands a grim eunuch armed with a gleaming scimitar.

In reality there is only an old beldame there, who transmits the orders of her mistress and takes in the parcels brought by men-servants. Harem windows are easily recognised by their wooden gratings which permit the person behind them to see all without being seen. Like the ladies themselves who live there, the harem wears a veil to screen it from the vulgar eye. It has an outer door by which ladies can leave or enter the house, and which is always open to their female friends. At this mysterious portal it is not uncommon to see a Parisian milliner or a music-mistress knocking, for Turkish ladies like to dress now-a-days as much like *Parisiennes* as they can without stays ; and the piano-strumming nuisance is as terrible at Stamboul as anywhere else. Here we might say a word or two about Turkish music.

To the European just arrived it is simply an insufferable noise. The airs have neither rhythm nor key ; notes long drawn out are suddenly followed by a startling cadence embellished by shakes, *appoggiature* and twirls of all sorts. The whole has the effect of a musical epileptic fit ; and this impression is strengthened by the performers who, while twangling and trilling scream lustily in a throaty nasal voice. The intonation is as charming as that of a locomotive's whistle with the little vibrato at the end. It is positively terrifying to watch the unfortunate dilettante trying to bring out of his larynx sounds that most resemble the mewing of a jealous tom cat. The muscles of his neck are distended, and sweat covers his brow from which his fez is tilted back. With half-shut eyes he howls into the void as if he were suffering from a horrible stomach-ache. Perfection in this art of song consists in prolonging certain

high notes until the breath fails, and in finishing up by odd little *florituri* that die away in the recesses of the nose.

A foreigner hearing all this for the first time is so bewildered that he willingly yields to his impulse to escape from so distracting a noise. The first impression, however, should not be allowed to guide him. Let him forget the quaint execution, endeavour to listen several times to the same air and try to understand the metaphysics of this kind of melody. He will then discover more than one musical motive that is both charming and original. It is of course painful to follow all these disjointed jerky phrases that the performer vainly tries to play in six-four or eight time. In fact, it is a wearisome essay in musical gymnastics; abrupt changes of key, wild chromatic ascents and declensions, galaxies of false notes. But after some time it will be seen that these airs are based upon a gamut unused by us, but which, as a scale, is no less logically constructed. It is—

do, reh, mi fa
sol, lah, si, do.

It is composed of two semi-scales formed of a tone and a half-tone between two semi-tones. The song has a sweet melancholy, a plaintive tenderness about it. Words and melody are moreover closely connected, the former being almost always marked by delicate sentiment. This is the text of a romance written by Chevki Bey, which is now in vogue :—

Hale nezimdé adjerçen sevdiguim dinlé beni
A benim rouhi révanèm séven enlsunmiséni
Firkat olmassa dirgh iylemezem djan ou téni
A benim rouhi révanèm séven enlsunmiséni.

Memalik sana feda iylemémek eldèmidir
 Her nè var icé héba iylemémek eldèmidir
 Achéken guiah ou hata iylemémek eldèmidir.

When I lie on my death-bed, thou wilt mourn for me, beloved,
 For loving thee, sweet heart, why must I die?
 If in this world no parting were, I had not thus given up my life
 for thee.

Must I then die for thee, for loving thee?
 How shall I not give up to thee all I possess?
 How shall I not yield thee just all I am?
 How shall I not make sacrifice of all that lives, for thee?

But this *intermezzo musicale* has probably bored the reader, whom we left standing at the door of the harem. So with him we will now continue our visit. The furniture of a Turkish house is extremely simple, especially in the *selamlık*, as the Turks have the good sense not to let a desire for show make them display all their finest and most expensive things. These they reserve for their inner apartments. The carefully white-washed walls are rarely papered or hung with tapestry or carpets. In some of the finest palaces the walls are completely bare, and all splendour and richness of decoration are reserved for the ceilings. There are neither bookshelves nor pictures, whatnots nor cabinets; occasionally a frame is hung up containing a verse of the Coran embroidered in gold on a blue ground, or in vermillion on a gold ground. A Smyrna or Daghestan carpet adorns the parquet floor, and a large divan is placed against two sides of the apartment. There is no open fire-place nor stove; but a *mangal* or brazier of burnished copper, often very handsomely wrought, supplies this want. On a whatnot of the purest Faubourg St Antoine style stands a clock of no less pure Faubourg St

Denis pattern ; picturesque sconces are hung close to vulgar petroleum lamps ; there is a profusion of staring waxwork flowers, shrined in a glass case, and several tawdry little ash trays strewn about here and there. The clock, be it added, is often a musical one, and plays "*La Fille de Madame Angot*," or the "*Beautiful Blue Danube*," for the Turk dearly loves a musical box or a hurdy-gurdy which turns out tunes to order. Never think to find in a Turk's house beautiful Damascus furniture, inlaid with mother-o'-pearl and ivory, or indeed any of those Oriental treasures which are occasionally for sale in the bazaars, and which remind one of the Arabian Nights. The interior of a Turkish house at Constantinople is all that is most commonplace, vulgar and inartistic. In Arab houses at Damascus or at Cairo one may yet admire furniture and hangings that still keep their local colour, and preserve yet something of true Oriental magnificence and splendour.

For the harem, again, are reserved rich carpets and divans ablaze with gold embroidery and velvet cushions covered with marvellous needlework. Here, too, are draperies and shawls of quaint design, plates of bronze and of beaten silver, crystal goblets and all the many little Western knick-knacks bought or received at *Bâïram* and other festivals. The centre of the room is always left vacant ; no table is ever placed there, for it would only be in the way. Turks like large rooms with little or no furniture in them ; and their first care is to get fresh air. In this respect the Turkish house is far inferior to the Arab one with its inner court and fountain. But the Turkish house is more gay perhaps, on account of the many windows which adorn at least two-thirds of its front. Along the Bosphorus stand

whole rows of kiosques, which are literally made up of windows. This shows that the main point for Turks in building a house is to make it a well-ventilated one, where its inmates may rest in temperate, refreshing atmosphere.

Talking of windows, let us add that the Turk, for whom architecture and painting have little charm is on the other hand deeply sensible of the beauties of nature; he has an evident appreciation for tranquil, fair horizons, and knows how to choose sites that command views of the loveliest landscapes. In this, one may recognise a contemplative people.

So much for the house. Now for those who live in it. What do they do? The answer is a plain one:—they do nothing. Dressed in his loose *feradji* and baggy linen trousers, the master of the house spends whole days curled up on a divan, smoking cigarettes and looking out of window. You will never see him reading a book or a newspaper. He is sunk in his *kief*—a sort of nirvana or state of bodily and intellectual somnolence; a state between sleep and waking, a state of torpor and stagnation, animal and mental.

If friends call, they are received with the most cordial effusion. Cigarettes are brought, with coffee, preserves, rose-flavoured cakes and mastic. After the first civilities have been exchanged, talk, slow, grave and measured, begins. Only after some minutes of silence does a question get its answer, and conversation is always pitched in the most moderate, friendly key. It would seem as if sage philosophers were exchanging ideas pregnant and weighty with wisdom. But listen, and you will note that these ideas and reflections seem profound because they are totally hollow. All is conventional, all conforms to a sort of

ritual, it is like reading a manual of conversation, it is a mere interchange of antiquated, cut and dried compliments mixed up with trivial tittle-tattle, vague opinions as to the weather and the crops, and a few dull stories made duller by the citing of antediluvian proverbs. In all such talk there is not a single touch of a personal, individual sort; it is lighted up by no original opinion nor any flash of thought. Great and burning questions for men, such as politics, religion or social philosophy are naturally shut out from discussion; economic, industrial and commercial problems are unknown, since in such servile occupations the Turks have no part. Nobody reads anything, and moreover the Government is careful to suppress all news. So there is nothing of interest to communicate, and ordinary dialogue in its pompous monotony leaves the head empty and the intellect sluggish. Add to all this that the rules of civility oblige one to pile up grand adjectives and epithets such as "Your blessed health," "Your exalted person," "I, your humble servant," "I, the dust of your holy feet," etc., etc.

If the visitors stay for dinner, after an interminable period of waiting, a servant brings in a large tray that is placed on a low table or stool. This tray holds hollow metal dishes which contain the food. Neither knives nor forks are served out to guests, but each with his right hand rends the meat and breaks the bones, deftly severing joints with his nails. The Turks are wonderfully adroit in this piece-meal work. They only use the thumb and two fingers of the right hand, for one must be careful never to put the left hand into the dish. With their three fingers they can scoop up the *pilaf* far better than with a spoon. The meal is soon over, when everyone conscientiously goes

to perform his ablutions at a white marble fountain in an adjoining apartment. In some wealthy Stamboul houses little forks are now used, but this Western luxury is far from common, and is rather an innovation calculated to content European guests.

One word as to Turkish cookery. It is both varied and appetising, though always greasy and somewhat indigestible. Mutton and chicken form the staple fare, beef being rarely or never eaten, as Turkish agriculture does not allow of oxen being killed for food. Mutton is prepared in the form of little knobs, grilled on a spit with flakes of lard and sage-leaves, much as they roast ortolans or *beccafichi* in Italy. Chicken, whether boiled or roast, is usually served with rice or tomatoes; sometimes with bamias, a singularly slimy vegetable, like a green capsicum in form and a slug in taste, of which both Turks and Greeks are extremely fond. On the preparation of vegetables, however, the Turkish cook expends all his art; the dishes of cucumbers, vegetable marrows, tomatoes and vine-leaves stuffed with tasty force-meat are really excellent, and would adorn any European *ménu*. *Pilaf*, the national dish, always ends up the meal, when all *pièces de résistance* have been demolished. The rice should never be over-cooked, and may be flavoured with saffron or tomato-sauce. As for salads, their name is legion; lettuce and cucumbers are often eaten raw. For some of the sauces, sour milk or *yaóurt* is used, of which the Turks eat much. Flaky, short pastry called *paklava*, despite its bath of butter, sugar and honey, is excellent. Then there is *mahlebi*, a sort of custard made with flour, sugar and milk, with a dash of rosewater to flavour it; *helvâ*, *pekmès* and many other sweetmeats

more or less tempting. The Turk is a past master in the art of making sweets, sugar-plums, jams, preserved and candied fruits and syrups. Let us not forget the *rahat locûm* or Lumps of Delight which have achieved fame in Europe, nor the eternal *simit*, a sort of hoop of biscuit or cracknel, covered with grains of sesame, which the Mussulman nibbles at any odd moment in the day.

As dinner is often served late in the evening, it becomes difficult for guests to return to their homes, especially if their host's house be situated on the Bosphorus, for after seven o'clock P.M. there is no steamer to take them back to town. They must therefore sleep under their entertainer's roof. He has mattresses put down on the floor of the selamlık; slaves bring to each guest a nightgown and slippers wrapped up in richly brodered silk, and after bidding all his friends good-night, the master of the house returns to the harem. This habit of sleeping at friends' houses is a general one and derives from the time honoured traditions of hospitality. A Turk often stays with friends in this way for three or four days before he returns home. And, though Ottoman wives are used to these frequent disappearances of their husbands, they still are uneasy as to the reason of these absences. With much cleverness and cunning they set a watch upon him, and between harem and harem there is a system of private communication which often results in the confusion of the faithless spouse. Despite the seeming state of slavery in which the wife is kept, the husband must nevertheless be very prudent and wary when meditating such escapades. Far from having perfect freedom—outside his own home, as in Europe, he must for ever be on his guard, for he is surrounded by

a tribe of veiled and masked inquisitors—relations, friends and servants of friends of his wife, whom he knows not, but who know him well, and will faithfully report all his little frailties to his jealous injured spouse.

The life of Turkish dames is yet lazier than that of their lords. It is made of visits to pay and to receive, long shopping excursions to Pera, longer chats in the baths or outside the mosques. At home the mother is busy with her babies, which she brings up with more tenderness than wisdom ; then, a great resource is afforded in dress and in changing toilettes several times a day. Most of the Turkish ladies, even the prettiest, paint and plaster themselves in a deplorable fashion ; with rose and rice powder they make their cheeks a lively white and red, while carmine paste deepens the hue of their lips, and cosmetic darkens their eyebrows. With antimony powder they touch up their eyelids, so as to add brilliance and intensity to their gaze ; they also chew mastic which strengthens the gums and sweetens the breath, while dyeing their finger nails and even the palms of their hands with *henna*. Parisian vagaries, alas ! have even reached the banks of the Bosphorus, and now fair Circassians dye their magnificent black tresses a greenery-yallery colour, or else a flaming red, the colour of mahogany varnish. The hair is cut short in front and frizzed, being plaited behind, occasionally ornamented by feathers, false flowers, or jewels, which may be distinguished under the filmy head-dress which covers all.

Many of the Turkish ladies in Stamboul dress like Europeans, with embroidered skirts, flounces and bustles, but in the staring colours of the stuff and trimming of their gowns they show their Oriental taste for bright and strongly

contrasted tints. Often, with a most expensive toilette, they will wear coarse stockings without proper garters to keep them from wrinkling round their legs. This carelessness is the more striking, because the Mussulman dames, so jealously veiled in the upper part of their person, are most free in the exhibition of their calves and ankles. It was this which made De Amicis say somewhat maliciously that a Turkish lady's modesty stopped at her knee and sometimes higher. They are almost always deplorably shod, either in double-soled shoes that are too large and too heavy, or in little slippers of satin and pasteboard. Their walk is totally devoid of grace ; it is a sort of clumsy balancing that reminds one of the rolling gait of a rhinoceros, and gives to the youngest and prettiest woman an air of decrepitude and age. The whole dress is hidden under the *feradjî*, a large loose-fitting cloak. Considering that the *yashmak*, or muslin veil covers up the brow and lower part of the face, leaving only the eyes visible, it must be granted that a lively imagination indeed is needed to fall in love with any of the Turkish ladies that one meets in the street.

What amuses foreigners much is to see the little Turkish girls taken out for a walk dressed up "to the nines" in miniature ball dress of pink or yellow silk, with long trains, and covered with flounces, lace, ribbons, and gold embroidered velvet. The child's head is often decked with artificial flowers and feathers. The little Turkish boys often wear a complete officer's uniform, with a sword and epaulettes. The Osmanli is very careful about his dress, being got up with an exquisiteness which his stately would-be majestic manner only sets in relief. But many

of the Turks are extremely dirty, both in their person and in their dress. With greasy coats, dirty nails, and dirtier linen, they lounge in the Pera brasseries over pots of beer for hours together.

Besides dressing, walking out and chatting, the Turkish lady has no diversions whatever. She is utterly ignorant, and it is only lately that some little attempt has been made at giving her instruction. True there is a most successful school for Turkish girls at Stamboul, under the sole direction and superintendence of a young Irish lady, but many old Turks are full of gloomy prophecies about such attempts to civilise, and with many a solemn headshake, declare that it will all lead to domestic revolutions and the breaking up of homes. Perhaps they are not so far wrong. The young wife has neither the resource of books, of the theatre nor of little social gatherings. Being always kept away from men, her mind can never get that clearness and brightness which only comes from continual contact with male intellect; with her husband, she has only one subject of conversation: the pleasures of the flesh; and in her descriptions she uses words the coarseness of which would shock a navvy. Hers is not exactly licentiousness, ribaldry of expression, but rather naive, ingenuous realism. She talks like a naturalist of the Zola type, but without knowing it.

One very meritorious quality the Mussulman wife possesses: she is faithful to her husband. Does this result from those terrible laws which condemn the adulteress to be sewn up in a sack with vipers, and flung into the Bosphorus? Is it an effect of her perpetual separation from the stronger sex, which saves the woman

from falling a victim to her own weakness, and to the charms of an Eastern Don Juan? Anyhow, adultery is extremely rare.

Those young bloods of Pera who brag of their conquests, and the ravages they have worked in Mussulman homes, are little more than impertinent humbugs. In the first place, they are far too cowardly to risk their delicate skin in romantic adventures which might all too easily take a tragic turn. Moreover, the means of accosting and of meeting a woman are so rare and so perilous, that such intrigues, if they ever occur, would only owe their success to accident. If any women do this sort of thing, it is those whose husbands, in their capacity of State functionaries, are called away from home to the provinces for a considerable time.

Probably our readers will now ask us a very natural question. It is this:—If the wife in Turkey does nothing whatever, and if the husband only smokes cigarettes on his divan all day, who is it that manages the house? Here we touch upon a radical vice of Ottoman society. The management of the house is entrusted to the head servant, a sort of majordomo who orders, buys and pays. It is easy to understand how this personage swindles his masters, taking bribes from the tradesmen who want his custom, and presenting the most fantastic bills to his mistress, who is powerless to question their accuracy! No family ever knows how much it spends a year, nor what sum husband and wife may devote to dress or amusement.


In all things Turkey is the land of the uncertain, the indefinite. So long as there is any money in the cash-box,

gold is flung out of windows, and, as we have seen, there are a good many windows in Turkish houses !

The effendi rackets in Pera ; his wife ruins herself in purchases at the bazaars, while the servants pillage and swindle with fresh zeal. When the funds run low, no one has any anxiety, but all continue to squander until the bottom of the money chest can be seen through the coins that half conceal it. Then tradesmen are no longer paid, promises and postponements *sine die* are lavishly made, in fact, all the thousand well-known tricks to baffle duns are used. The greatest families and the wealthiest State officials have thus their periods of extreme penury ; and, if you question European merchants, it is surprising to hear quoted, as among their bad debtors, persons noted for their opulence, and who, from their position as Government servants, have princely incomes.

What is the poor creditor to do ? In the law courts he is not sure of justice, though his cause may be a right one ; and should he win his case, that would be no great help. For when it comes to executing judgment upon his creditor, how shall this be done ? The Turk's domicile is inviolable ; he cannot be evicted, nor can his goods be sold. As for his salary, that belongs to the *saraf* or usurer, to whom he has pledged it at a heavy percentage. The best way is to wait, to be patient, to call, not once, but a hundred times upon your debtor and try to catch him at a moment when he has got a little money.

What plaintive recitals may be heard from the lips of English tailors or French dressmakers who can get no payment from their clients, and who bitterly curse the day when first they set foot in this wretched land of debt and



deceit! Occasionally the situation becomes worse, and the Turk, with a certain brutal insolence, waxes wrath with his unfortunate Christian duns. Hating work himself, he has a deep disdain for such as live by it. In a way it is the disdain of the aristocrat for the shopkeeper. The Turk does not mince matters, but calmly issues the order, "give those people a beating;" and it is carried out. We once saw a poor Paris milliner whipped and half strangled by a palace official of standing whom she had civilly asked to pay her bill. Many European tradespeople, especially women, are afraid to present their bills without being attended by the *kavas* or gendarme of their consulate. The Turk is furious at having to pay his debts to a Christian, and regrets the good old time when the *giaour* could be fleeced with impunity.

Another source of worry in Ottoman households is the number of servants employed. In every respectable family there are a whole shoal of domestics each with a special function to perform and who on no account would consent to do anything else. One opens the door; another draws water; a third looks after the fires; and so on. In the harem there is kitchenmaid, a washerwoman, a sempstress, a nurse for each baby and even a woman to dress the little girls' dolls! Then there are black slaves; and eunuchs.

We confess our inability to understand how, in the year of grace, 1888, Europe still tolerates the existence of eunuchs. A great fuss was made in favour of the emancipation of slaves, and England, on this occasion, took an initiative that was as laudable as it was noisy.

But, after all, these niggers from America and the Colonies were, as a rule, fairly well treated. They were doing useful work, for they were tilling the ground ; and, in marriage and fatherhood, they had their consolation. Can their lot be compared with the cruel fate in store for eunuchs ? Given over at a tender age by mercenary parents to rapacious executioners, they are forced to submit to a most horribly painful operation ; and figures show that more than half the number of castrates never survive it. Livingstone says that two out of three succumb, while we have Sir Bartle Frere's assurance that every year a million of African negroes are sent as slaves to Turkey, Persia, and Egypt. Out of these five of such slaves, only one reaches his destination. Thousands of youths are thus wantonly immolated each year, while the others are condemned to remain all their life-time an object of horror and scorn. What have they done to merit this ? Is it not abominable, iniquitous that such ferocious deeds should be done unhindered ?

These poor fellows are the victims of their parents' shameless greed and of the idiotic barbarity of the Turks. Yet Europe which never ceases to meddle in all the Porte's affairs has not yet found a way to put a stop to such a disgraceful state of things. It is a sort of homicide committed publicly every day in Europe, in that Europe that is so proud of its civilisation and its philanthropy ; committed at thirty hours' distance from Vienna, Budapest or Odessa. Will not the Western nations who once shed so much blood to protect persecuted Christians in the East devise a way to stamp out the remnants of such ferocious tyranny ?

Is the nineteenth century, famed for its grand conquests of humanity, to pass over and yet permit a nation encamped on the edge of European soil to mutilate its thousand children in such hideous wise, while letting tens of thousands perish on the road to thralldom and infamy? *Fuori i barbari!*

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PERSIANS AT CONSTANTINOPLE.—VALIDE HAN—THE
BLOODY FESTIVAL OF HASSAN AND HUSSEIN.

WE ought not to close this study of the Mussulman population of Constantinople without adding a few words about the Persians, who form an important element in the Stamboul commercial world. No less than 10,000 or 12,000 in number, they live in three Hans (buildings like large cloisters or monster barracks) where they sell carpets, embroidered stuffs, astrachan, tea, tobacco for *narghilés*, arms, and choicely-wrought metal plates and vases.

Wholly unlike the Turk, the Persian is laborious, active, and a clever man of business. He runs along the streets, while the Mussulman walks slowly and gravely; he has the true commercial instinct, real genius for trade, of which he knows all the tricks and artifices. He is cunning, too, and sly, telling lies with surprising *dplomb*. While the Turk does not trouble to count, the Persian counts remarkably well; and, in exacting interest, is positively rapacious. At bottom, he is more barbarous than the Osmanli, but he is less effete; he has more backbone; his intelligence is

clearer, quicker. In brief, we might say that Persia may one day become a great nation, while Turkey is but the remains of what was a great nation.

The Persians are to be recognised by their long *caftan* (like a dressing gown) of dove-coloured stuff, tied at the waist by a broad band of silk. Over it they wear a loose open robe of some dark material; their head-dress is the well-known astrachan *calpak*, which nowadays is dwindling in size, some being hardly bigger than an ordinary fez.

To make a closer study of the Persian colony, the foreigner should be present at the festival of Ali, at once a touching and a horrible one, which is kept on the 10th of Mouharrem, the first month of the Mussulman year. As few Europeans are usually at Constantinople when this awful ceremony takes place, we shall give a detailed description of it, for it counts as a most characteristic feature in Oriental life.

A word first as to the origin and scope of this ceremony. Ali, the nephew and son-in-law of Mahomet gave his son Hussein as bride the only daughter of the Persian King Yezdidjird. Ali's family thus possessed at once sovereign power and religious supremacy. But, in the strife at this epoch Ali was assassinated in the mosque of Koufa* while his two sons Hussein and Hassan were strangled in the most horrible manner at Kerbela, with their families and seventy of their friends. Mussulmans in Persia still remember this massacre with great dread and grief; they commemorate its anniversaries by funeral processions and self-tortures of the most awful kind. In some parts of

* Hence the ancient writing, Koufic.

Persia, *tazieh* or mystery plays are performed, in which Ali, Hussein, Hassan, with their wives and children figure. For many of the Shiite sects, Ali stands on the level of Mahomet; some see in him the most perfect and spotless of the thousand incarnations of Allah. This idea also obtains among certain Turks; and even among Jewish and Nestorian tribes. Nine-tenths of the Persians are Shiites, differing in this way from the Turks and Arabs who despise them. Yet the Ottoman Government, in a praiseworthy spirit of tolerance, allows the Persians full liberty to celebrate their festival unchecked.

The most important part of the ceremony takes place at Validé-Han, a huge building which, from without, resembles a mediæval fortress. It is inhabited by some five or six thousand Persians and has a quadrangle twice or thrice as large as the Palais Royal in Paris. This court-yard is surrounded by a double row of galleries lighted by ogival arcades; it is like the cloisters of some immense monastery of the twelfth and thirteenth century. The galleries lead to rows of cells and little rooms which are used as offices, shops, or private apartments. In the corridors, cooking is done for members of the colony; and *cafédjis* stand at all points ready to serve customers. The whole building is of massive stone; and with its granite walls, portcullis and iron-barred windows, closely resembles a fortress of the middle ages. And that, in fact, it was; a stronghold in troublous times for merchants, and a store-house for their goods.

The Festival of Ali is preceded by nine days of prayer, and it ends at sunset on the tenth day. The court of Validé-Han is completely draped with black, when night

comes on, and countless lamps and candelabra of crystal and coloured glass are placed against the walls, Venetian and Bohemian mirrors being hung behind and beside these, that reflect the glitter of a thousand lights. Portraits of the Shah of Persia, or of the Lion and the Sun, are also displayed in every part. All round the court, sofas, chairs, and divans are placed for the accommodation of distinguished visitors, who come to witness the spectacle. And soon Kavasses from the embassies arrive, heralding the approach of foreigners. Pretty Europeans, who for two nights could not sleep for thinking of the blood they should see flow, walk timidly up with their husbands; and brazen-faced ambassadresses and Levantine ladies, who, so far from feeling shocked, stand on chairs, and, with opera-glasses, glut themselves upon the dreadful sight. The Persians receive these fair visitors with exquisite courtesy, bringing, for their refreshment, tea, with slices of lemon in it, served in little crystal glasses, besides cigarettes and *narghilés* for the men. The Turks crowd in from all parts, especially the officers and the *ulémas*; there are at least 20,000 spectators, the galleries of the second floor being crowded with Turkish and Persian women. The latter are recognisable by their sad-coloured robe and black veil of gauze, which wholly masks their face.

The festival begins: from afar the strident sound of cymbals is heard; it is the funeral cortège approaching. Now night has fallen, and the great braziers, set at intervals all round the court, are lighted, which contain pinewood, steeped in petroleum. The flames leap up fitfully in the wind, and weirdly illuminate the whole scene.

The first procession passes ; the musicians, going before, repeat, in plaintive rhythm, in six notes—*mi, re, do, si, la, sol*—a tender mournful phrase, which is played by seven or eight clarionets in unison. Each note, which has the value of $2/4$ measure *adagio*, is accentuated by a cymbal stroke. It is impossible to imagine the melancholy charm of this touching melody ; no funeral-march could produce a more saddening effect. Then suddenly bursts of grief are heard throughout the crowd ; it is the Persians mourning for the death of the two young heroes, Hassan and Hussein. While some sob mechanically, others are really carried away by their sorrow into hysterical weeping, and the tears stream down their cheeks. Then a *uléma* or a dervish addresses the throng, and rehearses the whole sad story of the young men's martyrdom at Kerbela. His recital is now and again interrupted by sobs and wails, and all his listeners cover their eyes with their hands and weep bitterly. The cortège then moves on : at its head walks a man carrying an enormous staff, wrapped round with rich shawls ; behind him floats the standard of the Prophet, besides black and white banners, with embroidered inscriptions. Richly-caparisoned steeds, draped with finely-wrought hangings and saddle-cloths, follow ; they are the war-horses of the young martyrs' seventy friends. Reversed on the empty saddles are two damascened shields and two scimitars with crossed blades. Another horse carries a sort of palanquin, representing the tent in which Hussein and his family were murdered. Through the blue and black hangings of it are seen his young wife with her babes. Horsemen, dressed in black, escort this group, flinging from time to time handfuls of

straw into the air. The last horse of all has a white saddle-cloth, and trappings bedaubed with red to imitate blood, while two pretty doves with carmine-stained wings are perched on the saddle, to which are bound two long gold arrows. These birds symbolize the pure souls of the two martyrs.

After the horses, two rows of Persians walk, beating their naked breasts and crying in a hollow voice, "Hassan! Hussein!" Then, the clank of chains is heard, and another band of men passes. Their dress is black, with white letters upon it, which makes them look like demons. Their back is bared to the waist, and with long iron chains, which they grasp in both hands, they whip themselves furiously, each stroke, as it falls on their naked backs, being marked by the crash of cymbals. We noticed that these flagellants have a certain skill in breaking the force of their self-inflicted blow before it falls; but, for all that, their backs are often covered with blood and horribly wounded.

This, however, is nothing. The most awful part has now to come. Uttering wild cries, some two or three hundred men advance in double file; they are bare-headed, and wear long white gowns. They are the Nezirs. Each with one hand grasps the girdle of his neighbour; in the other he holds a gleaming scimitar, with which he gashes his shaven head until the blood streams from it, drenching his face, and staining his white gown crimson. No pen can ever paint all the horror of this scene, which the braziers illuminate and make more grim. So, in two lines, these crimson, dripping heads go past, their features contracted by spasms of pain and religious frenzy, and with

wild eyes ever and again blinded by blood and clotted gore. Each Nezir has his defender, who walks behind him, and, with a staff, breaks the force of the self-inflicted wound. Sometimes a regular struggle ensues between the fanatic, who would make himself a martyr, and his protector, who strives to save him from death. From some their sabres have to be wrested by force. We saw a child of eleven inflict upon itself such frightful wounds that it had to be seized, and its weapon forcibly taken away. These hand-to-hand combats, the noise of sticks beating against bloody sword blades, the dull chop of gleaming scimitars upon human skulls, the streams of blood, the wild frenzied cries, the glare of torches; the delirious, gory faces; the crash of cymbals, and the scent of resinous pinewood—all this was as a picture for us of some grim battle of barbarians in Asia, a contest between two rival hordes, and, to quote the poet's words, we felt that we were here

"As on a darkling plain,
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night."

Having thrice filed past, this procession of blood-stained phantoms moves off to another Han, and then to a third, where they go through the same horrible tortures. When passing before the Persian ambassador's box, the fanatics raise their smoking, bloody sabres aloft and petition for the pardon of certain prisoners, a favour that is never refused.

Other processions succeed the first and the festival ends about nine or ten o'clock at night. In 1886 we saw some ten thousand persons thus file past, over six hundred of whom,

the Nezirs, tortured themselves in this way for nearly three hours. The Nezirs are devotees who have made a solemn vow in some grievous illness or great danger. Sometimes a barren woman will swear that if she bear a male child he shall be a Nezir.

On leaving this hideous spectacle we go to the baths, whither the victims have been led; and it reassures us somewhat to find that most of the wounds are not dangerous, being only on the crown of the head and liable to heal quickly. When the unfortunate men have been stripped and washed, hardly any trace of their gashes can be detected. Their head is bound up in linen cloths, over which they put their fez; and their blood-stained gowns they carefully preserve and carry away with them, as, according to a religious law, they must inter it on the morrow in sacred ground.

When returning to Pera, we notice several Persians going home with their heads wrapped up in linen, a bloody sabre in one hand and a hideous gory bundle in the other. Their tranquil appearance would lead one to suppose they were members of a *corps de ballet* going back to supper after rehearsal. We recognise the tobacconist from the corner shop in our street, the man from whom we occasionally hire horses, and the tea-seller close to our house. To-morrow they will all be cured of their wounds and with their compatriots must go to the Great Cemetery at Scutari and there offer up prayers. It is in this place that the horrible festival is brought to a close.

CHAPTER IX.

TURKISH FINANCE.—CUSTOM HOUSE OFFICIALS. —THE SARRAF
NUISANCE.—AN EMPIRE FOR SALE.

IN the present chapter we shall touch upon Turkish finance. At this announcement, our readers with a smile will probably shake their heads in significant fashion. Indeed, as regards the bad reputation of Turkish finance there is nothing more to be said ; it is a reputation that is solidly established. At the very word “Turkish securities,” pocket-books, purses and safes shut with a snap and a shiver. So it is useless to write long elegies upon so distressing a subject, though to show the causes of this discredit may not be without interest to some.

First and foremost we denounce the irregular system of taxation and the absurd manner in which this taxation is enforced. We have already seen that Crown and Church property are exempt from taxation. Being without statistics, it is impossible to estimate the extent of land which these two exceptions comprise, but undoubtedly it is immense, as in the Bagdad districts Crown property is

almost illimitable ; it is only known to extend from such and such a chain of mountains to such and such a river. Tithes are still estimated on the promise of the crop. Thus, when the corn is threshed, the cultivator is obliged to let the wheat lie in the open air, in exposed places, until it pleases the tax collector to pass by. During this time, the grain is parched by the sun or made rotten by rain and damp soil. Birds and other little nibblers of the field collect tithes on their own account, and so forestall the two-footed nibbler who represents the Empire and who stubbornly exacts his share. Thus there is a double loss, both for the producer and for the State.

To realise tithes the Treasury is forced to become a grain merchant and consequently to suffer by the fluctuation of the markets. If the crop be abundant, the price of cereals falls and the State only realises an insufficient sum. With such a system as this, try and establish a budget !

Again : in each province a group of speculators exists that buys up the tithes, and the reader can thus easily imagine that an understanding has long been come to between such speculators and the tithes-collectors. Either party does his best to plunder the State as much as he can. The tithe may thus be compared to a stick of barley-sugar at which everybody takes a good suck before letting its owner enjoy it. The deficit is easily explained by the inclement season ; rain and drought are two excellent excuses with which to meet any indiscreet questioning. By this system of embezzlement, therefore, the State only gets about 60 per cent. of the taxes to which properly it is entitled.

To remedy these abuses the Government makes over the

tithes revenues to concessionists; and then another difficulty arises up. These "serpents of the desert" who look to make thumping profits, show themselves wholly merciless towards the poor peasants, treating them with the utmost harshness and severity. Armenians, who excel at this kind of work, enjoy a unique reputation; even towards their compatriots they are inexorable, persecuting them with truly fiendish cruelty, so that the unfortunate rate-payers prefer to have dealings with the Government employés. Then it is that some of the peasants in despair make their escape to the woods and mountains where they live upon roots and whatever grain they may have been so fortunate as to hide. Of what use is it to work if they be thus despoiled of the fruit of their labour?

Besides the tithes, there is *verghe*, an income-tax of from ten to twenty-five per cent. imposed upon all Ottoman subjects. There is also the *bedel askerié* or tax for exoneration from military service, which all young non-Mussulman subjects have to pay. We have already pointed out how dangerous for the future of Turkey is this idea of excluding from her army all Ottoman subjects who profess the Christian faith. While seeking to favour the Mussulman element, Turkey is surely, albeit unconsciously, preparing its effectual removal.

The customs duty on import goods in Turkey is at the rate of 8 per cent.; and there is a duty of 2 per cent. imposed upon export goods. Clearly this duty at the outset seems to have been invented expressly to dwarf and stunt the development of national industry. In such way Turkey thinks she favours her exportation movement! What is yet more irrational is that corn exported from

Trebizond or from some Asiatic port to Constantinople must be subjected to this 2 per cent. duty ; consequently there is a rise in the price of bread,—a rise which the Turkish consumer only encourages. This system thus favours foreign competition, and it is often cheaper and more profitable to get certain articles from abroad. For instance, no one in Turkey has ever yet succeeded in producing potatoes at a price moderate enough to compete with those imported from Marseilles and Trieste. To eat a beefsteak in Constantinople, one must get the beef from Russia, the butter from Italy, the potatoes from France—quite an international beefsteak, is it not ? Turkey only—ah ! we beg pardon, Turkey *does* supply something : she supplies the parsley.

We have already said a word or two about the “operations” of custom-house officials. Every traveller on reaching as on leaving Constantinople is obliged to slip a *baksheesh* into the hands of the custom-house officer, even though his luggage contain nothing liable to duty. The Turkish authorities calmly shut their eyes to this scandalous proceeding. Indeed, why should they not ? How else are the wretched employés to live on their twenty-five francs a month—if they ever get them ? The tourist cannot avoid giving this fee, even though he open all his portmanteaux. Woe betide you if you are refractory and protest. The custom-house officer can then be very nasty to you and cause you no end of inconvenience. He will “make hay” with your things, smashing the most fragile by sheer inadvertence, and confiscating anything rare or valuable on the most impossible pretext. It is all an exasperating system of tyranny, the more odious because it masks itself

behind sham laws and regulations. But whatever you do, never attempt to argue or dispute, or the law will of a certainty put you in the wrong, however right you may be. The best plan is gently, gracefully to capitulate, and unhesitatingly to submit to a nuisance which everybody is obliged to bear.

At the custom-house there is no fixed scale of taxes for goods. Custom-house offices exist at Stamboul as well as at Galata; accordingly differences of the most surprising sort result. For on the same article at one office you will pay just half as much duty as at the other. The tax of to-day is never the tax of yesterday; and to-morrow it is sure to be changed, for all depends upon the official's caprice, upon the degree of his ill-humour, upon the amount of the arrears of salary due to him, upon his digestion or his indigestion. Officials with yellow, haggard cheeks are usually severer than potbellied ones of lymphatic temperament. If they have occasional half-hours of ferocity, they have minutes, on the other hand, of suavity and matchless courtesy. Deem yourself lucky if they only fleece you with moderation.

Let me quote a personal case, to confirm these assertions. When I brought my furniture with me to Turkey, by the intervention of an Ottoman functionary, I was able to establish my rights to exemption from paying duty, as all the things I brought with me were not new, but had seen service. On this occasion I was careful to present a certificate, made valid by the Turkish Legation in Paris. The director of one of the Custom-Houses was so courteous as to put himself out so far as to confirm the legitimacy of my claim. Yet, despite the presence of this exalted

personage, I had yet to pay, on the quiet, one hundred and fifty francs to his subordinates, so as to avoid my luggage being overhauled and pulled about, when I should certainly have lost countless little nick-nacks. As it was, the whole time a spectacled "functionary" was gravely examining all my books in a corner, throwing down such as were displeasing to his fastidious taste on the muddy ground. Later on I shall have something else to say as to this bibliophile and his revision of my library. On leaving Turkey, I had to get another new certificate, when a superior officer was so kind as to verify the fact that I had nothing to pay—nothing except seventy francs as a fee for such verification !

When one has done with these *douaniers*, there are the porters or *hammals*, who each want their *baksheesh*. To them must be entrusted your luggage or your merchandise, you must accept their prices, and meekly bear the consequences of their clumsiness and brutality. For, in fact, there is no redress, though merchants continually make vigorous protest against the existing state of things. At Smyrna, such tradesmen as did not buy the sympathy and goodwill of these gentlemen were victimised in every conceivable manner, their cases of goods being always battered about, and occasionally rifled. A bulky volume could be written upon the scandals of the Turkish Custom-House, but we leave the whole sorry matter to be treated energetically and effectually by the several European Chambers of Commerce at Constantinople and Smyrna. It is at least to be hoped that they will use every effort to protect the interests of their compatriots.

Indirect taxes have another destiny. They are given

over to a vast bank, which undertakes the service of the Ottoman Public Debt. These indirect contributions are :

	Annual Revenue in Turkish Pounds.
Salt	639,589
Spirits	220,896
Stamps	133,122
Fisheries.	38,400
Silk	23,809
Tobacco	759,342

To these must be added the contributions from Cyprus and East Roumelia, at the time when this latter province paid its tax. The control of the tobacco revenues has been entrusted to a private company, the *Regie*, which pays in to the Public Debt an annual sum of seventy-five million piastres. This wretched *Regie* is an object of hatred and execration for the Mussulman peoples, who set fire to the depôts, massacre the agents, and promote smuggling with untiring audacity. Every day there are tales of desperate and bloody encounters between the *coldjis*, or gendarmes of the Company, and smugglers, the latter being usually victorious.

The Public Debt is administered by a Council over which alternately the representative of the English, French and German bond-holders presides. This body makes praiseworthy efforts to develop the vitality of the six branches of production conceded to it; but unfortunately it is first obliged to act in concert with the Turkish Government which effectually paralyses all its efforts. Many a time the Administrative Council might have

wrought great progress in the culture of the vine and of the mulberry as well as in the rearing of silkworms, had it only not been obliged to draw along in its train that drowsy, self-opinionated slug, the Department of Agriculture!

Events in Bulgaria have been very damaging to the resources of the Public Debt; especially is this true as regards the revenues obtained from salt, silk, fisheries, and tobacco. As for East Roumelia it has ceased to pay its annual *redevance*. The State has now only the revenues derived from passports, forests, mines, posts and telegraphs, and the tributes of certain vassal provinces. One cannot travel in the interior of the Empire without a passport or *teskeré*. It costs three francs. As for the forest revenues, they can only steadily diminish, on account of the ceaseless robbery and destruction to which they are subject. The mines revenue is far from being that which it might be, as the proper working of some of the richest is impossible, owing to the want of means of communication; and yet few countries are so well endowed as Turkey, with argenteous lead, iron, copper, boracite, antimony, etc. In Albania, there are huge coal-mines, while Macedonia possesses considerable mineral wealth.

It may here be added that all the accounts of these several imposts and taxes are in a hopeless tangle. This, of course, is due to the muddle purposely made by the collectors, who delight to trouble the waters in which they fish. Turks usually put down totally different receipts on one and the same list. Then, again, when these receipts are checked, the difference in the almanacs brings about a confusion which might rank with that of Babel. There

is the Turkish calendar, the Arabic calendar, the Greek calendar, the Gregorian calendar, the Jewish calendar and the Coptic calendar. Each day therefore represents six different dates. Thus October 2nd, 1886, is also the 20th of September, 1886; the 3rd Mouharrem, 1304; the 20th Hou, 1303; and the 3rd Tisri, 5647. We may call this the art of muddling up dates. Go, now, and try to establish a budget with this chronological jumble and this antagonism between sun and moon!

The postal revenues are far from brilliant, as the greater part of the service is absorbed by the foreign Post Offices established in Turkey. At Constantinople there is an Austrian Post Office, a British Post Office, a German Post Office, a French Post Office, and a Russian Post Office. The same establishments exist in all the maritime and commercial towns of the East. At Smyrna most letters are sent through the French Office. In Europe it may seem strange to some that Turkey should permit foreign nations to start on her soil a postal service, which in other countries counts as a thoroughly national institution, and which insures a considerable revenue to the State. More than once the Ottoman Government made attempts to get rid of these voracious worms gnawing at her vitals. But the nations interested have always objected, pleading, as a reason, the insufficiency and the insecurity of the Ottoman postal service. "What?" they exclaimed to the Porte. "You have just abolished your local post, so admitting your own incapacity to transmit a letter from one corner of Constantinople to the other, and then you would pretend to undertake to carry the correspondence of our compatriots all over the

Empire! When you have got your own postal service thoroughly organised, we will talk over the matter again." So poor Turkey must drag along as best she can. It is touching to note that the Ottomans themselves always make use of the European post offices whenever they can.

From all this it will be seen that the Treasury revenues are extremely limited, and, while all pressure is put upon the people, only about half is obtained of what, under good and sound administration, might be collected. Though on the rate-payers these taxes fall heavily, they weigh very little when transferred to the coffers of the State. The greater part of the revenues is eaten up by the army, a goodly portion being absorbed by the Palace and its swarm of lazy parasites, so that little remains to be devoted to public works, to civil administration, or to education. Under such conditions, the State is forced to have recourse to two expedients: it does not pay its tradesmen; it does not pay its servants.

As regards the former, it is less at its ease than as regards the latter. For, from time to time, some small sums of money have perforce to be paid over to those who furnish the Government with goods. Were that not done, they might absolutely refuse to supply it with further necessities. But this is a favour that is bought dearly. For six, seven, eight months creditors have to dun the Porte twice or thrice a week, which represents a loss of from ten to twelve days per month. They are led such a dance, from Dan to Beersheba, from Government office to Government office; and at every stage in this agreeable jaunt, a clerk gravely sticks on to the bottom of their petition a little slip of paper on which he has scrawled a

few lines. In six months' time, the strips of paper, like the tail of a kite, have grown to the length of two metres. The upper part being the older, has already got yellow with age; this peculiar change of tint is a sign that the hour of payment draws near. Then there are most extraordinary signatures which have to be examined and ratified by officials who have always "just gone out;" and one also must await the decisions of mysterious councils that never meet. The surest plan for a State creditor is to make an agreement with some influential official and promise him twenty per cent. upon the sum due. In this way the weary waiting is in some degree abridged; though all is not over; for the cashier of the Ministry will do his best to foist upon the luckless creditor paper securities that are of little or no value; drafts upon this or that provincial treasury which nobody is ever likely to find. These paper securities are called *havalés*; and, in converting them into hard cash, one's loss is usually from fifty to ninety-five per cent. We knew of an unfortunate merchant who had been thus paid in *havalés*, payable at the provincial treasuries. In getting them cashed he spent more money than the amount due to him, for he had to travel all over Turkey. In fact, he had become a regular nomad, and talked of living henceforth under a tent!

What, then, is the result of all this costly mystification? Well aware that they will not be paid until after endless delays and then only at the cost of ruinous sacrifices, the creditors grossly exaggerate the amounts due to them, making the sum almost double, so that eventually they may just get half. Thus it is the State serves to demoralise commerce. Be it here noted that we are speak-

ing of the most honest tradesmen. Others, void of any finer scruples, make an arrangement with the Government clerks and employés to pillage the Treasury; and it is these persons who very quickly become rich. By chicanery of this sort three-fourths of the biggest fortunes in Pera have been made.

As to functionaries, their lot is really lamentable. Some have to wait six months without ever getting a single farthing, others have claims for back-pay that extend over a year; and we knew certain officials who had not been paid for four years. This explains the wretchedness of the official world, a wretchedness aggravated by the usual improvidence of Turkish families who never can be brought to economise. Some dishonest sort of profit must be made out of one's official position; and business must be thwarted so as to force the interested parties to open their purses. In this sort of semi-brigandage the official is sure of the aid and support of his colleagues and his superiors, who hold grave confabs and make solemn plots to swindle the State or private individuals, much as some latter-day Fra Diavolo might organise an expedition to carry off some notable inhabitant or extort a ransom from his horror-struck family.

Despite all this chicanery, it most frequently happens that the functionary is of necessity forced to raise loans at ruinous interest, and barter away his patrimony or his future pay to the *sarrafs*, a body of usurers of which it may be as well to say something here.

The *sarrafs* as a corporation count about 4000 members, and in principle represent the modest and angelic phalanx of money changers. Have you no small change? Then

the *sarrafs* will supply you with it at a trifling profit. Can anything be more honest? But in reality the phalanx of changers hides the diabolical band of usurers. These vampires are everywhere; tranquilly seated behind their little glass counter, they are to be found at street corners, in passages and on the ground floor entrances to shops and lodging-houses, while others take up their position in a tobacconist's or a fruiterer's, or even at the door of a Government office. Wherever you go, there is the *sarrafs* ready to bleed you.

And first with regard to small change, be it noted that silver money is less sought after than the metallic. This dearth of small money is a scourge for Oriental commerce and the source of flagrant abuses; it is a continual embarrassment and check to trade. Certain proprietors of *brasseries* have even gone so far as to have metal tickets made, worth forty or fifty paras, and these they serve out to their clients as a coinage that has currency in every beer shop. Yet metallic money exists, only it is all in the hands of the *sarrafs*, who are too clever to let it go, but make their living by preventing the public from getting at it, and by maintaining the depreciation of silver.

The Turkish pound in gold is nominally worth 100 piastres, but owing to the low rate of silver, it is actually reckoned at 108 piastres. On the other hand, 100 piastres only represent $91\frac{3}{4}$ piastres in metallics. So it will be seen what a fine field for their manœuvres the *sarrafs* possess. Their most reliable base of operations is of course the *medjidié*, a silver piece of 20 piastres, similar to the French 5-franc piece, but really only worth 4 francs and 20 cents. The *medjidié* of 20 piastres is only accepted at 19 piastres;


and the sarraf when he changes it for you, gives you with four metallics, three silver five-piastre pieces, on each of which when changed you lose 10 paras or a fourth of a piastre. So that the poor medjidié after all is only worth 18 piastres and a quarter. Moreover it is an object of terror and aversion to everybody, and shopkeepers will readily invent any pretext for not accepting it, and any ruse for getting rid of it. There is no fixed rule about this, for while banks and commercial houses in Stamboul only take the medjidié at 19 piastres, bakers, butchers, grocers, fruiterers, restaurant-keepers, and most of the Pera tradesmen will accept it at its full value—20 piastres. Clever housekeepers, too, have a wonderful talent for getting rid of their medjidiés in the shops where they buy things; they know how to make the sum total of their purchases reach just 12 or 15 piastres, so that when breaking a medjidié they always can get back 7 or 8 piastres in small change. I remember well with what triumphant joy my cook, a Viennese Jewess, came to me once and stated gleefully that for a whole month she had only changed one single medjidié at less than its full value, viz., at 19 piastres.

Another strange fact! On the Karakeuy Bridge there are two Turkish Steamboat Companies (the Mahsousse and the Shirket-i-Hairie) for the service to stations on the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmora. One of these takes the medjidié at 20 piastres; the other will only give 19 in exchange. So, if you can spend three minutes in going from one ticket-office to another, you may actually make the huge profit of one piastre!

European merchants reckon the Turkish pound at 23

francs, and banking-houses at a rate varying from 22 francs 75 cents. to 22 francs 90 cents. The rate is very low when it is a question of pounds to be received, and very high when pounds have to be paid away. The Consulates and certain European Post-Offices only take the Turkish pound at 22 francs 50 cents., and the medjidié at 4 francs. Between ourselves, these establishments ought to make a pretty living by this ingenious system of accepting silver at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. below its proper rate. True, you are allowed the privilege of paying in European gold, but to do this, again, you must go to the sarraf, so the whole thing revolves in a horribly vicious circle.

As a result of all this, in Constantinople everybody is changing money from morning till night. In the morning you change a pound for medjidiés, losing half a piastre. Then, again, you change a medjidié and lose a piastre, while on every five piastre-piece you lose twenty paras, or a penny. Thus your day is spent in losing money, and your pound, instead of representing twenty-three francs, only realises about twenty-one. When changing money to pay toll at the bridge, in the tramways, on the Bosphorus steamers, or at the Galata Tunnel, similar losses have to be incurred, which fall heaviest upon the artisan, the clerk, or the Government employé. They are the chief victims of this vile system. How are they to make their little purchases for the house? They must get small change somehow; all the medjidiés in the world will never help them to buy bread. A thrifty shopkeeper would rather refuse to sell something for a few piastres than take a medjidié. In not a few places you may as



well die of hunger as not, if you have only those great white pieces of silver in your pocket.

We once knew a crafty eating-house proprietor who made an arrangement with certain sarrafs, always to get from them every morning a good provision of metallics. And, without wincing, he always changed at their full rate, making no deduction, all the medjidiés that his clients tendered to him for their lunch or dinner. As a consequence, his restaurant was crowded, for everybody came thither to dine or breakfast at a place where the fare was good, and where the host, when you paid your bill, always changed a medjidié for twenty piastres without a farthing knocked off. Sly dog! He stuck on a piastre here and there to the prices in the *ménu*, and so amply made up on one side what he lost on another.

But small change is but the smallest of the sarrafs' sources of revenue. They undertake the keeping of deeds and family documents; they also advance money on jewels, precious stones, and plate. Here they have every possible opportunity to put pressure upon their hapless victims. In view of the prevailing depression, they make their terms each month more exorbitant, for clients flow in upon them in plenty. As lending money on pledge is forbidden by Mussulman law, recourse must be had to bogus sales. In this way they at once become proprietors of the objects left with them in pawn. The honestest among them ask as much as 1 per cent. a week, *i.e.*, 52 per cent. a year. What a paradise, then, for usurers is this dear Turkey!

The sarrafs also discount State papers, and the *havalés* or Government drafts on provincial treasuries given in payment to contractors or Government officials. These

latter, in their distress, have to throw themselves into the arms, or rather into the tentacles, of the sarrafs, who advance them the amount of their back-pay at the modest discount of 50 or 60 per cent. It is strange to note that the tax demanded is much less high for the salaries of the first quarter than for those of the second. The financial year begins in March ; and the sarrafs know that for the first month or so, the salaries are more regularly paid. Autumn salaries, again, are considered as well nigh chimerical.


The entire Turkish authorities may be said to be the prey of the sarrafs. Each functionary has his own particular vampire, who draws his life-blood. Certain of these droll bankers manage to get hold of the salaries of a hundred employés in the same Government office. Thus, at one swoop, they can claim an enormous sum from the State, and put it in a position of the utmost embarrassment. The Minister of Finance, as their debtor, has to come to an arrangement with them for the settlement of their claims ; and he must submit to their influence. Many stories about this are afloat—stories which no one can verify ; certain cashiers of the Finance department are said to have secretly agreed not to pay the Government Officials, so that these latter might be forced to go to the sarrafs. But let us not be too spiteful ; there is enough matter for scandal, as it is ! As regards these sarrafs, one has often thought of drawing their teeth and paring their claws. But, what tamer of wild beasts will undertake such work ? Everybody in Turkey, from the portliest Pasha to the most meagre quill-driver, has dealings with them ; everybody is in their debt as well. Thus, it is

impossible to do away with them ; all one can do is to abuse them roundly.

This sketch of the financial situation in Turkey explains the misery of the country generally, and of private people. It is not surprising that, amid such disorder, commercial interests should suffer terribly. Private fortunes melt away, and wealthy families, seeing their substance disappearing, are not slow to quit a country which has as its motto and device, " Make haste to grow poor ! "

And, in truth, within the last five or six years, there has been a general exodus. There was once a numerous and opulent colony of foreigners ; people lived in grand style, for money was not scarce nor hard to get, and fêtes and revels were the order of the day. By degrees, Pera became transformed, assuming the appearance of a bright, gay town, instead of being the home of outcasts and failures from all nations. But this is all changed now. The real Cœsi emigrated, the stucco millionaires remained of necessity, but they have tied their purse-strings tight ; everyone lives at home and saves, for nobody is satisfied with the present, nor has faith in the future. The signs of Turkey's decay are so manifest, that each man foresees certain, inevitable ruin approaching ; and prepares for this by abstinence. Most persons, let it be said, look forward to the smash as being a deliverance, a fortunate catastrophe. Often have we heard Turks exclaim, in a paroxysm of selfish excitement : " Anything, anything, rather than remain in this state ! "

The collapse has been hastened on by the famous fall in Turkish Consols. The good Ottomans, in their simplicity and ignorance, had set all their hopes upon these securities



which were worth about ten to eleven per cent. It was charming for the Turks every six months to be able to convert their little rectangular piece of paper into cash. So far more convenient than cultivating their own property at great trouble and expense ! In fact, everyone tried to sell his estates, if he had any, so as to buy these fascinating Consols. The very word *consolidated* has something reassuring, something non-perishable about it. Then came the disaster which everybody knows. For the entire population it was a terrible blow, from the petty artisan who had risked all his little savings to the rich proprietor who had exchanged his farms and lands for a few pages of chromo-lithographed paper. And the country to-day is still crushed beneath the weight of this catastrophe ; it has neither resources nor nerve enough to shake it off. After the immense fire of 1870, they were able to rebuild Pera, but the smash in Turkish funds was more fatal yet, and from its ruins nothing new may spring.

Add to all this that from time to time a war helps to swell the public debt. With every campaign, Turkey loses a piece of her Empire, and her resources are each time enfeebled. How, then, can one doubt that the end is near and inevitable, or that Turkey must perish or be transformed ? Yet has she vitality sufficient to bear metamorphosis ? That is the question.

The Government may perhaps gain delay by selling, every now and then, bits of the Empire. It is the system adopted by young prodigals who try to save themselves from ruin by bartering away each year a part of their patrimony. Turkey gave up Cyprus to the English ; she has let them ruin Egypt on the pretext of re-organisation.

The Porte could not prevent Roumelia from breaking away from her suzerainty and from joining Bulgaria, already emancipated eight years before. Turkey will have other sacrifices as bitter as these to make, if she would escape bankruptcy. There are still all the islands of the Archipelago, which can be sold at auction. And then, on part of the Ottoman territory, a board might be set up, with this melancholy inscription :

EMPIRE FOR SALE

Apply to the Sublime Porte, Stamboul, just opposite
Courou Tcheshmé.

Germany and England will do all the bidding, for Russia would prefer to help herself without paying. France again is so busy in setting up and setting down her Ministers, that she seemingly has forgotten the very existence of the East ; and only when all has been satisfactorily settled without her and against her, will she become aware of it, alas ! too late.

CHAPTER X.

THE TURKISH POLICE.—WHAT IS A TOWN WELL PROTECTED BY POLICE?—INSURANCE COMPANIES AGAINST MURDERERS.—SPIES LARGE AND SMALL.—DRAINS AND DISEASE.

WHAT can the police be in a huge heterogeneous town, peopled by the dregs of a hundred different nations, where each person only tries to live at the expense of his neighbour ; where manners and customs are both barbarous and licentious ; where justice, broken up into fractions among ten consular tribunals, becomes powerless under the rule of a government at once weak and despotic, ignorant and capricious, with a worthless administration and a venal magistracy ? Must not the police perforce fall in with the stream of tendency making for lawlessness ?

It is indeed powerless to face all its duties, owing to the vast number of crimes and offences. What its superiors ask the Turkish police before all things to do is that the town have the appearance of being orderly, and that it shall seem fairly decent in its indecency. Thus the main task of the police consists in preventing murder in broad daylight.

It is only fair to admit that public safety in Pera is now far greater than it used to be. As a rule, one may walk unmolested as well by night as by day in the Grand Rue de Pera, though it is dangerous to risk going down after dusk to the Galata or Kassim Pasha quarters, for there one might easily be stabbed and robbed.

Nightly assaults and robberies have moreover become far less frequent since the introduction of gas in Pera, and the establishment of bekdjis or night watchmen in the streets. But yet they occur often enough. We remember the story of the captain of some English vessel who was accosted at midnight near the garden of the Petits Champs by a foot-pad, who politely opened conversation by saying, "May I trouble you for a light?"

"Oh! certainly," replied the captain, drawing his revolver from his pocket. Putting his cigarette in the barrel he presented it thus to the thief, who promptly took the hint and disappeared.

Pickpockets in Pera, however, are rare. Perhaps it is that the field of their operations is not a very fertile one. The result of their exploring their neighbours' pockets may have been no very satisfactory one, for in Pera one must never judge by appearances, as all that glitters is not gold; it is often only nickel or aluminium. Burglary still flourishes in Pera—a modern form of brigandage much in fashion. Occasionally some of the more famous house-breakers are so maladroit as to fall into the hands of the police. Then there are interminable enquiries and counter-enquiries, all conducted in the true Turkish spirit of formalism and indecision. It is exasperating to see how the Osmanlis will waste whole months in bringing mis-

creants to justice and in handing over the guilty to the law.

Street fights occur almost every day, mostly in the Greek and the European quarters. The Turk, grave and courteous as he is, never lets himself be compromised in a public quarrel. The Armenian, sly and cowardly, is afraid of blows, and the Jew, who hardly dares raise his eyes, would certainly never dare to raise his hand. But the boisterous, swaggering Greek loves discussion; he grows hot, rants, swings his arms about, rolls his eyes and shakes his fist in front of his antagonist's nose. Fortunately, this fury is more noisy than deadly; two Greeks will often go on abusing themselves for an hour before resorting to blows. The quarrel proceeds to its pitch in terrible *crescendo*; then, just as the ferocious disputants seem about to spring at each others throats, they suddenly separate, each going different ways and grumbling loudly meanwhile. Occasionally, however, when rage gets the better of them, blows and boxes of the ear resound, and their dispute is settled by the pistol or the knife.

Let us suppose that you have gone into a *brasserie* to have a glass of beer. When the waiter brings it you, he will, at the same time, tell you the news. "Yesterday, a Greek shot a Bulgarian at the door of our *brasserie*."

"Did he, really?"

"Yes; they began to quarrel here, but happily we were able to get them to go outside."

The phrase is a characteristic one; the combatants are hustled outside the door, simply from motives of decency, just as one might hunt a little pussy out of the room, if it showed any marked desire to puke. If policemen ever

interfere, to their credit be it said that they are most energetically brutal; they have a way of administering kicks obliquely, which is quite irresistible.

Another important task for the police to fulfil is that of seeing that taxes are regularly and promptly paid by itinerant fruit merchants, pedlars, and the like. The shouts and abusive language of these poor wretches, when their baskets and scales are wrested from them, are dreadful; a sympathetic crowd collects round the victims and lustily performs a chorus of protest and indignation. The delinquent is then taken to the nearest police station—a dirty, tumbledown place, often wholly unfurnished, and destitute even of pen or paper wherewith to write down a report.

The Kassim Pasha quarter enjoys almost European celebrity as a type of a suburb supreme in filth, misery and vice. It is a valley devoid of trees, which has become a sort of *cloaca maxima* for the whole city. This drain, which is called a stream and goes by the poetic name of “The Nightingales’ Stream,” runs through the whole quarter and spreads out all its beastly contents to the sky. The yellow water might fitly be termed a concentrated essence of dead dog, for either bank is decorated with the carcasses of these hapless animals, that lie strewn amid broken crockery, empty tins, and various kinds of offal. On the banks of this pestilential stream stand numbers of low, wooden shanties, built anyhow and huddled together like rotten fungi at the foot of a tree. These huts are inhabited by a whole multitude of human beings. So narrow are the streets that two men cannot pass them abreast; the rain has made such deep ruts in them that

walking becomes extremely difficult. Hidden hands may dart out from behind walls and with long knives despatch their victim before he has time to utter a cry. Whoever chooses to risk his life in these places, is never sure to come out alive, not even in broad noonday. The police do not venture to explore such murderous dens, but let their inmates devour each other unchecked; and woe betide the heedless tourist who strays thither!

Sometimes, from a Pera hotel, the disappearance of a visitor is suddenly announced, and not a trace of him is to be found. The consulate tries to rouse the police from their torpor, and an inquiry, more or less thorough, is instituted. After a while, nothing more can be done than to draw up a report and sell the traveller's effects to pay his hotel bill. It may safely be wagered that the ill-starred tourist let himself be entrapped, believing some false promise to bring him into relation with a lovely houri who lodged in one of these terrible quarters of the town, that never give up their prey.

Of the two routes leading down from the hill on which Pera is built one leads to Kassim Pasha and the other to Galata, another sort of cosmopolitan slaughter-house. This quarter, in many points, resembles the environs of the London Docks. It is a collection of ninth-rate hotels, taverns, brothels, and music halls. The very place sweats vice and debauchery. Walk up the dark, dirty staircases of one of these low establishments, pretentiously styled *Concert Lyrique*, *Dancing Hall*, etc. Through the dense clouds of tobacco smoke you may distinguish a few ill-favoured persons who are talking a sort of volapük made up from ten or a dozen different languages, one and all

mispronounced. Their voices are husky with doctored alcohol; and at times they crack ribald jokes with the ladies who bring them their liquor—Italians, Greeks, Germans, Israelites; the very lees and dregs of Western whoredom. From time to time some draggled, painted songstress steps on to the stage, who in the bills is styled *artiste des Concerts de Paris*. In a harsh, grating voice she trolls out a dull or dirty French chansonette, as unhealthy, as repulsive as herself. Is this all that Western civilisation can send Eastwards? It would seem as if Europe had chosen this corner of Turkey whither to export all its refuse, its offal.

Amid such a rotten gang it is strangely sad to see bands of Bohemian girl-musicians, with bright, fresh, smiling faces, who have left their home to win a dowry in the East. They make up the female orchestras, which at one time were so popular in the Danube provinces and in Turkey. The conductor who wields his baton over their music controls their morals also, and is answerable for their virtue by contract. No record exists of one of these fair violinists having ever gone astray. When they have finished playing their overture or *pot pourri*, they willingly accept from gallant members of the audience a glass of beer, or some coffee, flowers, and sweets. Nor would they even refuse a supper or a pleasure-trip to Prinkipo or Buyukderé, on the condition that friends or their director's family accompanied them. Without being either prudish or bold, they seem quite disposed for matrimony; the prettier of them indeed often make excellent marriages. The others go back to their mountains, each with their modest dowry, and they easily find husbands. In Bohemia there is a

district where all the young girls of their own free will follow for some years this wandering life, learning from earliest infancy to scrape upon a 'cello or a violin. It is a strange and touching contrast to see these fresh-faced girls amid such a herd of vile, vicious people; they might be likened to lilies of the valley growing at the miry edge of a stagnant pond.

The entire Galata quarter is given up to vice and crime. At night the sound of ribald songs fills the streets; bands of young men visit brothel after brothel; all night long they drink mastic or liquors more fiery, and then when heads grow hot, there is a lively play of the truncheon and the knife. If by chance there should be a corpse, it is so easy to drop it quietly into the Bosphorus, which just there is some sixty feet in depth.

We already stated that there are no wharves at Constantinople, and this murderous quarter runs down sheer into the sea, which is ever ready to engulf the victim and shield the murderer. All this might be remedied, if along the Golden Horn large and well-paved quays were constructed. Mortality and hygiene in other countries are always closely allied. In Turkey, however, both are paralysed.

The Ottoman police reminds us of the sword of Monsieur Prud'homme—created to protect the bourgeois class, and, if need be, to oppress it. Certain Ministers of Police have made most scandalous profits by their abuse of the arbitrary authority which is theirs. It will suffice indeed to warn some luckless citizen suspected of this or that crime. The poor wretch, well aware that absolute innocence in Turkey is a very feeble guarantee, begins to

tremble in every limb, and tries to buy, at no matter what price, the silence of the police. It is simply blackmail, as levied by judges, magistrates, police-inspectors and their subordinates.

This trick is often played, and with invariable success, upon houses of ill-fame, gambling hells, and other low resorts. Nor would there be great harm in this, if the money thus amassed by taxing prostitution could be of benefit to the State, instead of disappearing into the pockets of certain functionaries who, in their turn, live by the prostitution of justice.

Some years back there was a great stir about a poor fellow accused of coining false money. The unfortunate man energetically asserted his innocence, but it appears that, in the well attached to his house certain tools and instruments of a compromising nature were found. The charge against him looked graver yet, until the hand of the police was detected in the whole affair. It was the police who had the happy idea of hiding these instruments in the unlucky individual's well. This time the Government was forced to take action ; and the Minister of Police lost his post. Soon afterwards, however, he was appointed governor of one of the chief towns of the Empire ; and an important concession has lately been granted to him.

Only lately a friend of ours was stopped in the street, in broad daylight, by an unknown individual, who struck him violently in the face with his fist, and instantly ran off. Perhaps this ferocious assault was the result of an error, but an error, anyway, of the most unpleasant sort. The victim of it was at once arrested, and led off between two *zaptiehs* to the police-station ; and there he was called

upon to pay a Turkish pound before he could recover his liberty. His first care was to rush to his consul for redress, but the latter sought to calm the fever by saying :

“What’s to be done ? If you like, we can institute an inquiry, but the affair will last for months, and its probable result is highly doubtful, for you don’t even know of what nationality your assailant was. Take my advice ; forget the blows you have received, and the money you have spent. We consuls have to reserve our influence and intervention for graver matters, for criminal affairs.” And the consul, after all, was perfectly right. The moral of this story is, that at Constantinople your country’s representative can protect you efficiently, but only after you have been murdered ! It is a sort of posthumous protection.

Often at the bazaar a merchant, with a face like a jackal’s, has been pointed out to me by persons, who whispered mysteriously :

“That man, over there, is the chief of the Constantinople brigands.”

“What ? There are brigands at Constantinople ?”

“Yes ; foot-pads who nightly attack people, and stab and rob them.”

“And these wretches have really got an acknowledged leader ?”

“Of course they have ; chiefs that give them their password, and represent them in their transactions with the public.”

The villains, indeed, do consent to negotiate—that is to say, one can negotiate *with them*. Young bloods who like to run risk at night in dangerous quarters of the town, may come to an arrangement with these professional cut-

throats. For a certain sum, they can purchase a guarantee against all assassination or robbery; and, if need be, they can call in the brigand's help to rescue them from the police. It is a sort of insurance society, where you pay so much to be saved from nightly assaults.

There are other enterprising persons who, for a certain modest sum, engage to thrash anyone upon whom you desire to be avenged. So, without compromising yourself in the least, you can administer, by proxy, a whole shower of blows to an enemy or a dun; "half a shower, half-price; quickness and despatch," etc., etc.

The operations of all these industrious gentlemen have grown more complicated ever since at night in all the streets, *bekdjis* or watchmen have been stationed. From sunset to sunrise these *bekdjis* are on guard, and their business is to track burglars and to prevent them from breaking into houses. They carry a long staff having a heavy iron ferrule, which they perpetually beat on the pavement. In the silence of the night, this noise becomes deeply irritating to the nerves of such as find it hard to sleep. It is as if the *bekdji* desired to warn housebreakers of his approach, so that they might promptly be upon their guard. Could anybody be more obliging?

The *bekdji* is also there to give the alarm in case of fire. Nothing is more grim at night than to hear the cry ringing through the streets:—"Yanghin Var!" There is fire! The syllable *var* is prolonged until the breath gives out; it sounds like a long wail of despair. The cry is taken up by the *bekdjis* in other neighbouring streets and soon rings throughout the whole town. Like a distant echo one hears it far off, at the extremity of Stamboul.

If in Constantinople there be a lack of order, what shall be said of the police in villages and in the country? There are, it is true, *couroudjis* or husbandmen, who look after fields and crops, and are paid for so doing by wealthy land-owners, but their task consists chiefly in making long journeys to the nearest town; and they cannot contend effectually against marauders.

As for the gendarmerie, in number it is totally insufficient. In Albania, in Macedonia, the brigands have become masters of the country; they can extort ransoms at will from the inhabitants, who would rather treat with them than have recourse to Government protection. Wise people prefer to sacrifice at once a certain sum to appease the bandits; it is a safer plan than to count upon the help of the gendarmerie. In many places, too, an amicable understanding is effected between the brigands and the police. The gendarmes, badly paid as they are by the Government and in a wretched condition themselves, are quite willing to accept subsidies from the brigands they are set to catch. So, by an admirable system of this sort, the police always arrive too late, in time only to lock the stable door when the steed is stolen. Certain bands of brigands live on unmolested for years; the names of their chiefs are as familiar as household words to the police, who are also accurately acquainted with their habits and can all but fix upon their abode. They have their agents, their men of business, their managers. These kings of the Turkish mountains are real potentates who levy taxes upon their subjects that are always most promptly and exactly paid. They even can afford themselves the luxury of maintaining, at their own expense, the gendarmerie of the State.

Besides the ostensible police force, of whose deeds and customs we have here spoken, there is at Constantinople a whole host of spies. An autocratic Government like that of Turkey, suspicious, craven as it is, cannot do without *mouchards*, and to recruit these is easy in a town where persons prompt to do any dirty work abound. The palace spies alone are estimated at 3000. Their duties consist in inventing and in imagining plots, and in doing harm to any Court personage whose influence seems to be getting dangerous. Thus they pretend to show their zeal and affection for their sovereign. We never met with any ex-employé who would consent to make revelations to us concerning the organisation of this secret police ; but in Pera certain individuals are pointed out as official spies. They are mostly Greeks and Armenians, Levantines and Europeans, who live in a free and easy style, no one knowing their means of existence nor their precise occupation. There are spies belonging to all ranks and to all nationalities. Some slyly make their appearance at *tables d'hôte* or at public taverns ; others play the man of the world, and by hook or crook get into the best society. The clerk is a spy upon his employer, and the servant upon his master ; there are spies and counter-spies. No one can count himself safe from such vermin.

A rich Armenian may give a dinner to a few intimate friends. With the dessert politics are discussed ; and each guest complains of the misfortunes that are his. Next day the host is torn from his family—exiled without a word of warning. He gets notice to cross the frontier within twenty-four hours. Which one of his guests was it who denounced him ? No one can tell, though each believes his

neighbour to be the spy who acted in so vile and cowardly a manner.

A professor publishes a volume of fables, which obtains the hall mark of the Press bureau and of the Government authorities. But a spy, anxious to give a proof of his zeal, manages, by twisting the sentences, to discover certain seditious expressions in these babyish dialogues. A fable has always a double meaning; it is this which characterises such sort of writing; and so it is easy to misinterpret the author's intentions and to make him say things which he never dreamed of saying. The poor fable-writer is accordingly dismissed from his post with the most brutal abruptness. If he complains, he may be sent off to some savage country for change of air.

A General, who, in the last war distinguished himself, perceives that his vines are like to fall a prey to the phylloxera. French and Turkish specialists, when called in to pronounce upon the case, advise the immediate use of sulphate of carbon, a substance that is both inflammable and explosive. Instantly, some spy rushes off to the Palace to accuse the General of having imported the phylloxera to his vineyards on purpose to have a pretext for procuring combustible material designed to blow up His Imperial Majesty's residence. In this infernal scheme the General, so it is said, has been aided by certain evil French anarchists, newly come from the land where kings are guillotined and palaces petroleumised.

For some of his friends, an official asks leave to visit the Dolma Bagtché Palace. Evidently this is done with a plot as its ultimate scope and end. An engineer proposes to set up a telephone service. A plot! a plot! a wicked plot!

Occasionally, this sort of thing borders on the grotesque, as when the Ministry of Marine permitted the fleet to make trial experiments in electric signalling. An order was promptly issued to suspend such experiments, as these jets of light flung upwards at the moon had scandalised the entire official world !

A charity fête is to be held at Cadikeui, on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, and the Turkish steamboat companies arrange to bring back the visitors to Pera and Galata after the dancing and fireworks are over. But, when the party breaks up, there are no steamers ! Their departure has been officially forbidden. Why ? "Because His Imperial Majesty, the Sultan, is not accustomed to see steamers running on the Bosphorus at such abnormal hours ; they might possibly be a source of uneasiness to Him." It is evident that the Padishah had no knowledge whatever of the midnight steamer-service, nor, if aware of it, would he have created such ridiculous objections. They were simply the outcome of the shrivelled brain of some officious underling, who hoped thereby to win favour in the eyes of his chiefs. But such things do not always remain within the limits of the ridiculous.

Occasionally, foreigners, who doubtless have been pointed out by spies as dangerous, disappear. A few days later they are found stabbed and lifeless in some by-street. The consulate straightway makes a fuss, and orders an inquest to be held, while the police pretend to be superhumanly active in tracking the assassins. Whole reams of paper are covered with long reports and minutes of evidence, drawn up by zealous and humanitarian officials. But, of course, it all leads to nothing.

Of course, the murderer is never found. Some perfectly innocent individual is arrested, and, after gross ill-treatment, set free; or else the deceased is declared to have committed suicide. If the poignard seem an imprudent means of destruction, there is always the Bosphorus. Its blue waves tell no tales. With a block of stone round his neck and twenty metres of salt water above his head, of what use for a man to rise up and protest that he has been the victim of a foul plot! Nor is poison a weapon to be disdained; a little after-dinner dose of arsenic with one's coffee, just as a pick-me-up, or rather as a lay-me-low! Most effective this, as a means for suppressing certain persons who are suspected and who have been exiled to remote provinces. This is what comes of absolute power, placed in the hands of the weak and the impotent. Excess of energy in the means; want of energy in the individuals. In this way a State is brought to ruin. It was this which destroyed the Venetian oligarchy.

Before ending this melancholy chapter, we must say a few words about a puissant body which has continual relations with the police; we mean the *touloumbadjis* or volunteer fire-quenchers, composed almost exclusively of *hammals* (porters) or *caikdjis* (boatmen).

Owing to the deplorable state of most of the streets, carriages, trucks and carts cannot pass along them, so luggage and packages of all sorts have to be carried by men on their back. In all Constantinople, (would you believe it?) there is hardly a single truck or wheel-barrow. Everything is carried by *hammals*, those two-footed beasts of burden, as Théophile Gautier styled them. In Constantinople, there are some twenty thousand porters, most

of them Armenians from the Van, Sivas, and Trebizond districts, whom speculators engage and bring to Galata, paying the expense of their journey, an expense which the *hammals* are called upon to refund by regular instalments. These men are marvellously strong; one of them can carry up unaided, to the second floor of some lodging, a piano, a harmonium, or if need were, a marble fountain. They live in quarters, and the inhabitants of each quarter are obliged to employ the hammals in their street, so that these, having no rivalry to fear, can easily maintain or even raise their tariff.

The porters as well as most of the boatmen form the ancient and irrepressible corporation of *touloumbadjis* or volunteer firemen. Everybody knows by hearsay or by experience how frequent fires in Constantinople are—so frequent, indeed, that they have almost ceased to be regarded as serious misadventures. They occur on an average of one every two nights. Nor are such disasters trifling ones, whole districts, whole villages being reduced to cinders in a night time. For there are quarters where all the houses are built of wood—crazy, sun-baked shanties, wedged closely together, which burn like match-boxes. Only last winter the pretty village of Arnaoutkeui, poised on the slopes beside the Bosphorus, was destroyed in a few hours, the flames darting their cruel tongues down to the very edge of the water, and robbing a thousand fugitives of their modest home. At Scutari, too, a similar catastrophe occurred some months since, when three-fourths of the town was burnt down, and over a thousand houses were totally destroyed. There is no need here to remind readers

of the burning of Pera in 1870, when hundreds of persons perished.

The *touloumbadjis* are called upon to help in combatting such awful disasters. And with what means do they do this? They carry a ridiculously small hand pump, the size of a Huntley and Palmer biscuit-tin, which perhaps holds two decanters full of water—a plaything, in fact, a pretty little toy! Besides this they have a ladder, rope, hooks, and a huge paper lantern, which is carried along at the head of the band. No tribe of Zulus let loose for plunder at night can compare in brutal picturesqueness with this horde of white *touloumbadjis* running at full speed through the streets on their way to a fire. As soon as the alarm is given, the *hammals* strip, and transform themselves into firemen, taking off jacket and hose and remaining in their thin shirts and drawers. They go bare foot, too, which is surely a strange precaution to take when walking over redhot cinders and burning timber.

Though the *touloumbadjis* make a great parade of their anxiety to rescue life and property at a fire, this is but a hollow profession of help. They are only thieves in disguise who loot the burning buildings. The population fears their presence more than that of fire. They have a marvellous scent for safes, or for those nooks and hiding-places where jewellery or money is kept. They are even accused of incendiarism, so that they may turn a penny by the event!

After all the disastrous fires in Pera and its neighbourhood, the Ottoman Government determined to establish a fire brigade, which has been organised by a Hungarian officer, Szechenyi Pasha, who at present directs it entirely.

He is the Captain Shaw of Constantinople, and his brigade is thoroughly efficient, and proves of invaluable service whenever a fire breaks out. But it is not sufficient in itself to cope with every disaster. Three or four brigades similar to this one should be organised, and the *touloumbadjis* ought to be suppressed. But these latter are such a powerful and turbulent body of men that the Government is afraid to abolish it altogether. It shrinks at incurring the displeasure of some twenty thousand sinewy sons of Anak, who, if roused, would stick at nothing. There is furious rivalry between the men of Count Szechenyi's brigade and the *touloumbadjis*; very often a free fight ensues between regulars and volunteers while all the houses are burning. The *touloumbadjis* are firmly convinced that the regular fire brigade is a brigade of usurpers, who, so to speak, have stolen their fires from them. They despise these paid rescuers, and loudly vaunt their own disinterestedness. But the people, who know their worth, only mutter the prayer: "Allah! save us all from fire, and from the *touloumbadjis*." Latterly, fires in Pera have become less serious, for when a quarter, or a block of houses is burnt down, it is usually rebuilt in more solid style—not of wood, but of stone and iron. For all that, the masonry is of so poor a sort that it needs perpetual mending.

Despite such improvements, however, the insurance companies refuse to insure a lot of houses all standing together in the same street; they will insure a limited number of buildings in each quarter. The rate of insurance is very high, and it varies according as the house has a wooden

staircase, iron shutters, or is placed in a good or bad quarter.

As we are not afraid of realistic details, when to give them may possibly do some practical good, let us say a word as to the great question of drainage and water-closets.

In the East these latter are of the most primitive kind—a simple hole in the ground, leading nowhere, and which, whether by night or day, emits the most appalling smell. Thanks to so elementary a system as this, the air in every house is infected ; and the stink in each, insupportable. No use for any embarrassing questions as to where is the W.-C. By a peculiarly subtle, yet unmistakable aroma, you detect its position immediately on entering a house. Yes, embarrassing questions are thus avoided ; yet what a terrible state of things should an epidemic break out in the city !

CHAPTER XI.

CHRISTIANS IN THE EAST.—ARMENIANS REAL AND SHAM.—
THE FUTURE OF ARMENIA.

AN Irish humorist, who has lived for many years in Turkey, and knows it thoroughly, remarked to me once: "It is the Christians who have corrupted the Turk." This may sound like a paradox, but in fact it is a great truth. For, wherever the Turk lives isolated from the Christian, as, for instance, in the heart of Asia Minor, he has kept all the qualities of his race—probity, truthfulness, simplicity. He may perhaps be a pilferer by nature, and have an unconquerable bent for brigandage, but they are family traditions these, which tend gradually to disappear.

On the contrary, contact with Christians turns the Turk into a hypocrite; he becomes greedy, double-faced and a liar. All the nobility of his character is effaced; European civilisation, instead of making him better, only emasculates, softens, debases him. If the Christian be not exactly a corrupter for the Turk, it is only just to admit that the juxtaposition of the two races most frequently produces

fatal results as well for the one as for the other. So, at the mouth of great rivers, the mixture of salt water with fresh, engenders that sort of putrefaction which takes the form of a pestilence or an epidemic.

In the same way that the Christian perverts the Turk, so the Turk perverts the Christian. The worshippers of Christ, who live in the midst of the worshippers of Mahommed, are not of more immaculate morals nor of cleaner conscience than they. They look upon the Mussulman as an oppressor who may be duped and exploited without scruple. But the Christians act in like manner towards each other. Co-religionists, who pray together in the same chapel, rob each other with touching reciprocity. Why not? So used are they to perpetual pilfering and plunder, that the instinct to exploit one's neighbour becomes irresistible. One must pick, pick, pick at everything within fingers' reach; if fingers be not long enough, one must stretch out an arm. This is the new gospel of the East: "My little children, cheat one another." You could imagine that you were on a battle-field after the fight, when marauders indiscriminately search the knapsacks and pockets of friends or of foes alike.

What conclusions are we to draw from all this? That this indigestible mixture of races and religions has been one of the causes of the decadence of the Turk. It is nothing more than a school for mutual demoralisation. The remedy, then, is that as soon as possible, the Mussulman element should be separated from the Christian element. We have seen how Greece, Bulgaria, Servia, and Roumania fared when freed from the yoke of the Crescent. How much did not these nations gain in

dignity of character, in energy, in morals! For them, it was a veritable renascence. And for Armenia, we doubt not that such deliverance would mean the same thing.

Justly enough, the Armenians pride themselves on being one of the most ancient peoples in the world. They have preserved their ancient writing and their national language. They are proudly mindful that most of the excellent fruits brought into Europe first had origin in their country; the grape, the apple, the pear, the plum, cherry, quince, mulberry, gooseberry, and almond. Here, in this region too, the savage ancestors of the dog, the ox, the goat, the sheep, the pig, and possibly the camel, had their existence. Thus, Armenia is a land which deserves the respect and gratitude of Europe, while most religious traditions are agreed in placing at the foot of her mountains the cradle of humanity.

In their own country, in these rocky mountainous districts, which stretch from the Black Sea to the valley of the Euphrates and to the Caspian Sea, the Armenians are an honest, laborious people, of gentle disposition, and greatly attached to their beliefs and to their historical traditions, while ignorant of the refinements of luxury. Though by nature docile, this nation has ever had much to suffer from the ferocity of the Turk; and to-day, the acts of oppression and of wanton cruelty committed by Pashas and governors-general are over frequent, provoking courageous protests from the Armenian clergy. But who in Europe cares to support the pleas for redress put forward by the weak? At the Berlin Congress, the Armenian Patriarch pleaded the cause of his compatriots, obtaining a favourable hearing, besides a promise of reform and of

protection. Can anybody now say which of these protective clauses has ever been put into execution?

Since Russia has advanced to Batoum, so swallowing up a part of Armenia, emigration has set in, and a large number of Armenians, living in Turkey and Persia, have gone over to settle upon Muscovite soil, just as Mussulmans, quitting the Caucasus, take refuge in the Ottoman provinces. Thus a double emigration current has been formed, its result being to increase the number of Turkomans resident in Armenia, and more and more to draw away Armenians into Russia.

It is a remarkable fact that, whenever a nation loses its independence, the members of that nation are dispersed, and go to seek their fortune in all the points of the globe. And so, to-day, Armenians are to be found everywhere—in the Danube provinces, in Greece, in Egypt, in France, in Italy, in England, in America. On the coast of the Sea of Marmora, near Ismidt, there are whole villages peopled solely by Armenians. In Constantinople, however, the most important colony exists, most of its members being engaged in commerce. Others, again, having doffed their national pride, occupy posts in the Turkish service. It was to these latter we alluded at the beginning of this chapter, saying they had greatly helped to corrupt the Turkish authorities. To save ourselves from returning to the subject later, it may be as well to speak of it at once.

One may boldly assert that whatever is worst in the Ottoman administration, is due to the Armenians. The reason for this is a very simple one. The Turk, up to a certain point, works for the good of his country; the Armenian works for no one but himself. Far from being

zealous to promote the prosperity and might of the Osmanlis, his main interest is that things may go as badly as possible. More intelligent, astuter, with greater foresight and capacity for work than the Mussulman, the Armenian is the Past Grand Master in the art of cheating. He knows how to be at once servile and intriguing, pliable and obstinate. To reach his ambitious ends, he will shrink from no servile act, however degrading. Excess of vanity makes him humble. He knows how to bow and scrape before his Ottoman chief, whom he condemns. He pretends to admire his superior, when really he is laughing at his incapacity and his ignorance.

That for which the Armenian race receives most reproach is its utter want of dignity of character. So striking is this defect, that one finds it unanimously pointed out in all works dealing with the East. Glance at the greatest and most influential persons of the Armenian nation. Agop Pasha, Minister of the Civil List and the Sultan's right arm, is a remarkable administrator and a financier of the first order. But he is surrounded by a little group of intriguing Armenians, who dominate him and lead him to commit acts of unpardonable weakness. Abraham Pasha, the Rothschild of the East, won his millions by pandering to the pleasures of the Sultan Abdul Aziz, and these pleasures consisted in putting poor Armenian slaves on the palace stage and causing them to be torn to pieces by savage dogs. His brother-in-law, Nubar Pasha, the illustrious Egyptian Minister, has made himself the docile servant of the English invaders and the agent of the foreign army of occupation. Take those three men, and you have the most celebrated.

Not only does the Armenian bear snubbing patiently, but he knows how to accept it with a smiling face and an air of hypocritical abnegation. And when a European is ill-treated by a Turk, he retaliates, exclaiming "Oho! you take me for an Armenian, do you?"

Many is the time that we have seen Armenians, mortal enemies both, mutually load each other with affectionate promises and walk about hand in hand, though either a few minutes previously, had declared that the other was an infamous scoundrel. Frank opposition, overt hostility are things unknown to the Armenian. He delights to snell out a secret, if need be, playing the eavesdropper and then running off to his chief to report everything that he has seen and heard. In all his machinations he will sacrifice, without so much as a moment's hesitation, his compatriots, his friends, his family. The poor Armenian peasants of Asia Minor would have reason to fear the tyranny of their compatriots far more than the Turkish yoke.

Some go so far as to sacrifice their conjugal honour and speculate upon the beauty of their wives as a stepping-stone to advancement. If they do not absolutely encourage this kind of prostitution, at least they close their eyes upon such peccadilloes.

The Armenian is before all things a lover of filthy lucre; he has a remarkable aptitude for financial questions and an instinct for usury. The Armenian functionary may be considered as he who brought venality in Turkish bureaucracy to such a pitch of perfection. If corruption did not exist, perhaps it is he who invented it. In many ways he is strangely like the Jew; he has the same intelligence, the same sagacity and servility of nature.

Thus our Irish humorist was not wholly wrong in saying that the Christians had corrupted the Turks; let it be noted, however, that the number of Armenian functionaries is relatively a limited one. If the Ottoman Government sincerely desired to winnow the chaff from the wheat and to purify its official world, it would be easy enough to expel certain demoralisers and to reconstruct an administrative body that should be wholly national. For certain inevitable questions of a technical kind, the temporary help of European specialists could be called in. That would be less dangerous for the Porte than to give important Government posts to persons of doubtful nationality, whose aim is not to be of profit to Turkey, but to make Turkey be of profit to them. Moreover, as regards instruction and professional competence, the Armenian is really in no way superior to the Turk, but he has the talent of making the latter believe in his ability. For this, he is so jealous of the interference of Europeans who might destroy this sham prestige. Armenian officials have no great love for any foreigners whom by chance the Ottoman Government may have pressed into its service.

Let us turn now from these sham Armenians, and speak of the really interesting portion of the nation, of that part which has never renounced its sentiments of nationality.

With singular imprudence, the Turkish Government, tyrannical and cruel in certain respects, has yet allowed its Christian subjects great liberty as regards their political organisation. Far from trying to assimilate this with her own, Turkey appears to have been careful to respect all their elements of solidarity, their traditions, and the sentiment of their community of origin. The Armenians and

the Greeks have their National Assembly, their Deputies, their Finance Departments. The Patriarch, assisted by a Council, plays the part of a veritable President of the Republic ; and a governing body of this sort organises a system of public instruction, directs the intellectual movement and superintends charitable institutions.

As regards his subjects, the Turk is careful only to extort money from them, and to keep them in a state of perpetual terror. "What does it matter what they think, provided they fear, and, above all, provided they pay." The Government never moves a finger either to instruct them, to better their condition, or to draw them to itself. Is this from laziness or from disdain ? One cannot say. But the fact remains that the *rayas* possess such independence as they could never have under a Government of the most constitutional kind. On the other hand, they are perpetually subjected to a system of iniquitous extortion and of capricious persecution. Viewed from a purely political standpoint, such a system of feebleness and tyranny would seem to prove that the Turks have committed a cardinal blunder. A conquering nation ought never to remain callous towards the peoples that it has brought under ; and its genius consists in conquering and effacing the antipathies that exist between its several subjects. During past centuries, the Osmanli should have sought to make what was individual in the customs, traditions, and language of his *rayas* disappear. They should have been welded into one body ; they should have all been forced to serve in the army ; and public instruction should have been developed for all. In a word, with all these broken fragments of peoples, one solid nation should

have been built. But this is just what the Turk could not or would not do ; he has awkwardly maintained a state of dislocation, and to-day the crazy edifice looks as if, at any moment, it might fall to pieces.

Thanks to this relative autonomy, the Armenians and the Greeks took all trade and industry into their hands, growing rich at the Turk's expense, having easily distanced him in intellectual culture, and in ideas as to progress. In fact, they are now more civilised than their masters ; and the laws of social equilibrium tend to reverse their position, and to put those uppermost to-morrow who to-day are at the bottom.

The Armenian thinks himself superior to the Turk ; he considers that he is on a par with the European, and that he suffers greatly in being forced to live under the sway of semi-barbarians. Thus he is wholly disposed to welcome an emancipation, and to put himself under the protection of a great civilised nation. If Russia should accept the rôle of redeemer and rescuer, this would give her great facilities for extending her territory south of the Caucasus.

It is mainly by his clear, flexible intelligence, good sense and active mind, that the Armenian resembles the European, showing a keen interest in all discoveries and a desire to move with the march of progress. This Oriental nation has a remarkable affinity with the French, for whom it professes great sympathy. The cultured Armenian speaks French fluently, without any perceptible accent ;⁷ he is acquainted with French literature, and reads all the novels and newspapers so soon as they reach him from Paris. All that occurs in the Western world interests, captivates him, whereas the Turk, absorbed in the contem-

plation of his *narghilé*, takes interest in nothing. The fair Armenians, intelligent and coquettish as they are, soon adopt Paris fashions, and with some success ; although they still exhibit traces of an Eastern taste for garish, inharmonious colours and for jewels or ornaments of enormous size. Such a nation seems to have been created to be a nation of tradesmen and bankers. The Armenian, if trained to it, would also prove a good agriculturist. He has but one idea, however, and that is money ; he only measures a man by the length of his purse. In the East, the sole talents of which one ever speaks are talents of gold. As regards education, the Armenian does not count it a means for the development of ideas, for strengthening the judgment, for improving the morals. In his eyes, it is but an instrument, a tool for the successful forging of business transactions ; and he only appreciates such ideas as can be immediately utilised quickly to make money. Of science and scientists he has a very poor opinion ; a professor gets little or no consideration. One only becomes a teacher after having failed as a wholesale grocer. "To teach children to read forsooth ! Is that a trade for any man of parts, who might earn as much as a hundred pounds a month !"

From such false ideas, public instruction suffers ; and so, in the schools, young Armenians are taught reading, writing, and above all, arithmetic—that being the art of counting. To this, some smattering of modern languages is added—a little Turkish, French, and English. When a young man possesses these acquirements, his studies are abruptly brought to a close and he is placed in a counting-house or a shop. Moreover, according to Eastern ideas, no

one is considered to be a man of worth, unless his hair be white. Thus, experience is confounded with knowledge. Respect for the aged is, of course, a noble and salutary virtue, yet it is none the less true that the exclusive preponderance of the gerentocracy acts as a clog upon the advance of a country, and checks it in its impulses towards progress. Thus it comes, that Armenia is often deprived of those of her sons, who, aware of their intellectual superiority, come to Europe to develop their powers in first-class Continental Colleges, and many afterwards refuse to return to their own country, where their talents are neither appreciated nor rewarded. In this respect, the Armenian is far inferior to the Greek, who has enthusiasm for things of the mind, and a reverence for the beautiful.

These ideas, however, have undergone change—at least, among the Armenians of Constantinople. The National Council has made praiseworthy efforts to raise the standard of education in the various schools, and to permit pupils who distinguish themselves to enjoy a more liberal course of instruction. Indeed, it would seem to have been understood that what constitutes the true greatness of a nation is the worth of its leading men. A nation, like an army, must have a distinguished staff. At Constantinople, several excellent Armenian Colleges exist; and one has lately been founded, the *École Centrale*, which corresponds in every point to the best establishments of its class in Europe. If the taste for instruction be not yet very thorough, as a fashion it is gaining ground. To the great honour of the Armenian nation be it noted that the very porters of Constantinople, rough fellows brought into the city from the wilds of Trebizond and Van, can nearly all

of them read ; and, sitting at street corners on their wedge-shaped, leathern pack, you may see them eagerly conning their newspaper while waiting for a job. This, in itself, is a considerable result.

Constantinople counts many rich Armenian bankers among its inhabitants. Let us not ask too closely how their fortunes were made, for in making such inquiries we should have to put aside all Western ideas as to rectitude and probity. Let us not forget, though, that in the East usury is a recognised profession, and that no person has the slightest scruple in fleecing the Government. Thus most of such wealth has been amassed either by furnishing goods to the State or by lending money to private individuals. There is no need here to expatiate further upon this subject.

The Armenians are also reproached with want of courage. True, in Constantinople, they give all too many examples of their long-suffering nature if not of their deplorable pusillanimity. But is not such a fault the result of long and ruthless oppression? They have grown used to swallowing affronts just as one may grow used to swallowing cod-liver oil, without so much as a wry face. Yet we must not forget those intrepid Armenians from the mountains of Zeitoun, who so valiantly fought against the Turks. They have never yet been brought under ; and while refusing to pay any taxes, they forbid Mussulmans to enter their territory.

The Armenians are divided into two sects, the Orthodox or Gregorians, and the Catholic Armenians. These latter recognise the supremacy of the Pope, and have thus drawn closer to the Latin Church. In return, the Vatican has

made certain concessions, such as the marriage of the inferior clergy, the observance of national rites and ceremonies at mass, which may be said in Armenian and not in Latin. Gregorian Armenians and Catholic Armenians have little sympathy for each other. The latter copy European ways and customs as closely as possible, and possess important educational establishments at Venice, at Vienna and elsewhere. The Mourad Rafael College and the Convent of San Lazzaro are too well known to need more than a single phrase of mention, though if the former had laymen and not sluggish, dishonest priests at its head, the nation, for whose benefit the college was founded, could not but reap advantage.

The Armenians have faithfully preserved their national language with its ancient alphabet of thirty-six letters, which apparently dates from the Phenician epoch. As a language, it is one of the richest that exists, containing most of the sounds which the different European languages have: the Italian *c*, the German *ch*, the Russian *i*, etc. To the ear, it is singularly harsh and unmelodious, a series of nasal splutterings, nearly every word ending with *z*. But, as a vehicle for poetry, it is said to be excellent. The national literature, indeed, consists chiefly of poems, and several patriarchs and priests are cited as lyrical writers of surprising power and sweetness. We might remark that many of the leading Armenian families of Constantinople never converse in their own language. Turkish or French is talked, but Armenian rarely, except with servants.

Authors disagree as to the exact number of the Armenian population, but private information permits us

to rate it at somewhat over four millions. The Patriarch of the Orthodox Armenians resides at Etschmiadzin, which is now in Russian territory. It is he who confers the right of investiture upon the patriarchs of Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Sis. The clergy, as a body, enjoys great influence, for it represents the National Administration, and it directs the progress of national education.

Owing to their easy-going, placid humour, and their inconsistent temper, it is difficult to believe that the Armenians will ever succeed in obtaining their autonomy. All that this nation ought to wish is that it should become a compact State under the protection of a great European Power. By the logic of events, Russia would seem to be destined to become Armenia's Suzerain Power, now that she stands already at the doors of Erzeroum. Let us hope that, if she ever have them, Muscovy may treat her new subjects as they deserve, sparing them the *tracasseries* of her official world, and all the petty jealousies of her clergy.

Armenia is a nation which merits the sympathy of all. That people is only to be admired which, during centuries of barbarous oppression, has kept its national language and its national customs intact. Its faults, which are servility, dissimulation, want of honesty and of energy, are the natural consequences of long servitude. Once let Armenia regain her liberty to expand, and she will become a flourishing nation, thanks to the intelligence of her inhabitants, to their aptitude for industry and commerce, to their sense of order and of economy. Let us add that

Armenia already possesses painters, musicians, and men of letters, who have gained celebrity in Europe, while the best actors among Orientals are Armenians. Thus, this people is called upon to march in the van of progress through these barbarous regions; possibly, in its turn, it may one day play the part of civiliser and reformer.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GREEK : ANCIENT AND MODERN.—WHAT EUROPE EXPECTS FROM HIM AND WHAT HE EXPECTS FROM EUROPE.—PROGRESS MADE BY THE NATION SINCE THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.—FORCE OF PATRIOTISM AMONG HELLENES.

DURING the epoch of the Greek War of Independence, Europe found no praise sufficient for the Greek people. In prose and in verse their courage was celebrated and their misfortunes bewailed, while classic memories were called up to hymn the resurrection of Greece and to predict its future prosperity. After such bursts of enthusiasm, a reaction set in, and Europe proved unjust towards her quondam hero. She seemed vexed not to find in him all the qualities which she supposed he possessed. Still intoxicated with the fumes of mythology, she expected to find a nation of demi-gods, and lo! she found a nation of semi-barbarians! So she denied the Hellenes even those good qualities which they possessed. Spite, like love, is blind.

Too soon was it forgotten, however, that the Greek nation had for centuries been held in bondage under the

Mussulman's brutal yoke. To desire that Greece should at once have all the virtues that were hers in olden time, joined to all the sweetness and light of modern peoples, were verily to desire too much. Of a convalescent, one would never ask feats of strength. It must always be remembered, that under the Turkish rule, no notion of progress, no idea as to instruction, could ever find its way to these unfortunate populations. Boys and young men were afraid even to walk through the streets in broad daylight lest they should fall into the hands of the brutal Janissaries, who would make them victims of their monstrous lust. At night only they could visit in mysterious fashion subterranean schools near the churches, where a priest or some notable member of the colony gave them lessons of the most rudimentary kind.

Greece has only just been born again; and she has all the headstrong, wilful, capricious temper of a child, though by no means of an incorrigible child. Instead of exacting from her premature perfection, it were more charitable to aid her in her impetuous efforts towards this end.

In common fairness, one ought not to judge the Greek merely by the type seen at Constantinople. One should go to Athens in order to know what he has already become, and what he may yet become. With what taste and intelligence has he not altered and embellished this beautiful town! What an impulse has he not given to education and to the fine arts! He has built roads, organised public works, an army, a fleet; in fact, within fifty years this little people, which started with nothing, for it had neither capital nor means of communication, has

distanced its old masters, the Turks, and now takes rank among the nations of Europe.

The Greek is gifted with astonishing intelligence; the commonest workman has a facility of comprehension truly remarkable. This fineness of perception attests the antiquity and nobleness of the race. If it often lack judgment and reflection, it will acquire these qualities when it can study more completely the exact sciences. It is an industrious nation, and has monopolised almost all the trades in the East. At Constantinople, Smyrna, Trebizond, Damascus, even at Alexandria and Cairo, all the tradesmen are Greeks—the tailors, bootmakers, hatters, restaurant keepers, grocers, glaziers, painters, carpenters, bakers; all are Greeks. They may be said to have all the activity of the East concentrated within their hands. All the shopmen, waiters, and barbers are Greeks; so are the dressmakers, the *modistes*, the laundresses. If Constantinople and Smyrna have fine shops, well stocked with all articles dear to Europeans, and arranged on the model of the best Paris and London houses, it is to the Greeks that such progress is due. Do away with the Greek population in Turkey and it will be no longer possible either to eat, drink, dress, or furnish one's house.

To these talents for taking the initiative, to this facility for assimilation add that the Greek possesses rare aptitude for the sea. By French Navigation Companies, Greek sailors are always sought for; and if the regulations allowed it, all the crews of French vessels in the Mediterranean would consist of Greeks. Unfortunately for the young kingdom, capital has been wanting to provide her with a fitting armament, but in time, when great fortunes

have been suffered to be built up, we shall see the Greek fleets cover the ocean.

Not that the descendant of Homer is impeccable. He has his faults. He is notably charged with being untrustworthy ; his word cannot be depended upon. His honesty, in truth, leaves not a little to be desired ; his cunning comes very near fraud ; and he lies in the most impudent manner. To these vices, the Greek of Pera adds others less serious ; he is noisy, blustering, familiar, obsequious, dissolute, a gamester and a drunkard. But faults such as these are the microbes in the corrupting atmosphere of Constantinople. The Athens Greek has more dignity and self-respect ; he is sober, and his morals are neither better nor worse than those of other peoples. He is accused of being quarrelsome, volatile, and presumptuous ; but could not such imperfections be attributed with equal justice to certain Western nations ?

We are here specially occupied with the Greek residing in Turkey, that is to say with the Greek who has not been regenerated by the exhilarating air of independence. He is generally detested by the Turk and the Armenian, who affect great disdain for his turbulence and unreliableness. The Greek on his part blames the Armenian for his servile fawning nature, while he treats the Turk with ill-concealed contempt. Since the war of independence, since the events in Bulgaria, the Greeks openly assume an attitude of menace towards the Ottoman Government. They are convinced that Macedonia and Roumelia, including Constantinople, belong to them by right, and, in their eyes, the Turks are worn-out usurpers for whom the day of final reckoning has at length dawned. Perhaps they are not wholly wrong

in thinking thus; but such aspirations do not sort with the actual resources of this little people, which has yet a vast work of organization to achieve. Despite such magnificent ideas, however, the Greek *raya* has not yet got rid of the sly ways which mark a subject people. Hence the falseness with which he is charged; he has never been able to cure himself of cheating. If he be a sharp intelligent merchant, that is not to say he is an honest one. Too often, he only proves to be the *polumêtis Odysseus* of antiquity. He would never scruple to break his word, if it suited him; and in honesty he is far inferior to the Turk. If summoned to appear before the local tribunal, he changes his nationality with surprising quickness. Proteus-like, he is to-day a Mussulman and to-morrow a Hellene. Even the Greek consuls complain of the part they are compelled to play when forced to give protection to individuals whose nationality is as doubtful as their morals.

The Greek is strongly attached to his religion, being in this respect still a fanatic. It is commonly thought in the West that Greece and Russia are closely joined to one another by a common bond of faith. Quite the contrary; in this field they are implacable enemies; and the Greek clergy would assuredly never accept the spiritual yoke of the Czar. The Greek religion is still farced full of superstitions; at Jerusalem no festival of the Church passes over without conflicts between Greeks and Latins; it was after one of these bloody brawls that Turkish soldiers were permanently stationed at the church and crypt at Bethlehem. The people are wholly in the hands of the lower clergy, whose bigotry is on a par with their ignorance. It is at Jerusalem that the scandalous fêtes of the Holy Fire take

place during Holy Week. The patriarch accompanied by two priests enters the Holy Sepulchre and is there shut up, where an angel is supposed to bring him fire from heaven at which he lights tapers and presents these to the faithful through an opening in the wall of the grotto. Then comes a most disgraceful scuffle, when thousands of people crammed into the Basilica push and hustle each other in the most brutal manner while striving to be the first to light their candles at the Divine flame. Many such devotees are killed in the crush ; in 1884, four hundred corpses were left lying on the pavement of the holy building ; and the help of the Turkish police with scimitar or yataghan in hand, had to be called in. From the flaming tapers wax falls in streams upon the devotees, whose dress often catches fire, their beard and hair being terribly singed. The ceremony is hardly over when all those so commissioned start off to travel through Palestine lantern in hand, bringing the Holy Fire to their co-religionists in neighbouring towns. Pilgrims from Russia carry back with them little lamps or tapers lighted at the celestial flame which are kept burning night and day. Terrible is the task for them to keep this divine spark unextinguished until they reach their homes. When they arrive, they are mobbed by the faithful who come from far and near, and gladly pay dearly for the privilege of lighting their taper or candle at the consecrated lamp. Underneath all this religious fervour there is a spirit of trade and of speculation. But it is useless to denounce such abuses. All such superstitions will quickly disappear when education, ever-spreading, shall have touched the masses.

One of the gravest charges that can be brought against

the Greek Church is that it encourages idleness, by adding to the number of its religious festivals. These are only so many more opportunities for idleness given to the people. In some districts, no fewer than two hundred and eighty festivals are observed yearly. Under such conditions, labour of any sort becomes impossible. The Greek clergy would act at once wisely and patriotically if they did away with so many petty feasts, on which rest from work is exacted. That would permit the Greek nation to march more rapidly along the path to progress; on the other hand, the popes themselves could so anticipate the ruin of their influence. Indeed, one can foresee the moment when the Hellene, with his critical mind, his turn for reasoning, and dislike of discipline, will shake off the yoke of religion, and become once more the sceptical, mocking people which he was in ancient days.

The Greek has been reproached with want of courage; this is, as it seems to us, a wholly unjust accusation. In their war of independence, the Hellenes gave proof of true heroism. Many a time they have revolted against the Turks, never caring for the barbarous punishment which must inevitably follow such revolt. How many Greeks, too, have sacrificed their lives in their devotion to the national cause? It should be noted, too, that until lately a large majority of Hellenes followed the noble profession of brigandage, a fact which at least shows that neither energy nor audacity are wanting to them.

True, the Greek as you have him in Pera, is noisy, demonstrative, but more blustering than dangerous; hot-headed, but with a certain instinctive prudence which often serves to calm the ardour of his blood. As to noise

and a row, he loves it; it is in his temperament. At Easter, his favourite pastime is to fire off pistols in the streets. Not seldom the weapons used for this purpose are old and rickety, so that accidents more or less serious occur; hands are blown off, and heads wounded by the bursting of revolver barrels. Every year the nuisance increases; but for all that the Turkish police have never yet succeeded in putting a stop to it. "The Turks," say the Greeks, "would never dare to hinder us from observing our ancient rites and customs." At midsummer, large bonfires are lighted in Pera and at Tatavla, and devotees dance merrily above the flames. Indeed, the Greeks delight in dancing and in dance music. On every fête-day (that is to say for three-fourths of the year) you may see them sitting at little tables in some tavern, drinking mastic, or heady, sweet wine from the Archipelago, munching meanwhile their *mézé*, which consists of an anchovy and a tiny piece of bread, slices of pickled cucumber, caviare, dried fish, or olives. If an organ-grinder or a stray violinist passes, he is at once summoned to play his liveliest stave; the company form a semi-circle, each holding the other's shoulder, and they begin their dance, a sort of quadrille-figure, with wriggling movements *ad libitum*. One man leads the rest, waving his handkerchief with all the grace of a *bayadère*, and executing steps that it would puzzle an acrobat to copy; and all this to the monotonous tunes ground out of *lanternas* or barrel-organs, which in turn play Turkish, Roumanian or Viennese dances.

Unlike the Turks, the Greeks have a feeling for harmony and for rhythm. Many of their charming national songs

they sing in chorus with a great deal of taste. Among the most popular of these we may cite—

Δυο πουλακια ἤμαστέ; Δεν με μέλεί; Ασπρ ἦσαι σαν το γιάσουμί.

The fairest side of the Greek's character is certainly his ardent patriotism. Hear him speak of his native country; his whole face lights up; his eyes sparkle; and it is plain that for country's sake he is capable of the utmost devotion. In 1886, many young fellows left Constantinople, gave up their appointments and bade farewell to their family in order to go to Athens, enter the army and fight for their country's freedom. This love for fatherland the Greek takes with him everywhere. When he has amassed a fortune in a foreign land, his first thought is for the mother country. He sends thither large sums for building schools and hospitals, for maintaining museums and for the restoration of ancient buildings. He comes to the aid of indigent students and struggling men of letters. Wealthy Greeks will give as much as from two to five hundred thousand francs towards the endowment of a school; and often such legacies amount to millions. It was thus that the magnificent Zappion College in Pera was built—a real palace which has been set apart for the education of girls, a grandiose building with a large staff of mistresses and professors, in fact with nothing wanting to make it an establishment of the very first class. At Constantinople the Greeks have the *École Pallas*, the *Lycée Hellenique*, the vast *École du Phanar* and others. In European Turkey and in Asia Minor there are 1069 elementary schools and 1247 primary schools, all founded by Greeks, while in important centres, colleges of a higher sort exist. Those who would make a

special study of this question, ought to read M. Chassiotis' excellent volume, '*L'Instruction Publique en Grèce.*' One cannot too greatly praise such munificent acts on the part of wealthy Greeks. The merchant, the artisan and the banker after their daily work find leisure in which to discuss educational schemes, to visit establishments, attend examinations and distribute prizes. It was Greece that in 1834 made education obligatory throughout the kingdom, thus, in the very year of her birth, setting an example to Europe.

From such remarks, it will be seen how Greece, with her limited budget, heavy debts, and ill-regulated finance, has yet contrived in so short a time to found universities, schools, libraries, and museums. The Greek delights to enrich and beautify his fatherland, to supply it with the material and intellectual resources necessary to its advancement. He loves nothing more than to give it somewhat of its old splendour. Ought not such ardent patriotism as this to win the Greeks pardon for many things?

A convincing proof of the great vitality of this people is its power of assimilation. Every foreigner settling in a Greek town soon becomes Greek himself; he adopts the language, the mien, even the physiognomy of the Greeks. Statistics prove that Bulgars who emigrate to the Greek towns of Asia Minor soon lose their original type and are merged in that of the Greeks. This is more remarkable among Europeans who settle in the East. All the children speak Greek, seemingly without having ever learned it; and those of the third generation have the features, the look, the gesture, the tone of voice of the Greeks. To this force of absorption, add the great fecundity of marriages

and it will be readily seen that the growth of the nation must be very rapid. A day will come when Greece will play a part *di primo cartello* in the settlement of the Eastern question.

We cannot quit the Greeks of Constantinople without a word or two as to the fair sex. This omission would be all the more unpardonable, as the Greek ladies of Pera and Galata are veritable beauties. Were we the shepherd Paris, we would give them each and every apple at our disposal. In Pera one meets superb heads, proudly set upon bodies that might serve as models for the most perfect statue. If the Armenian be now and again as beautiful, the Greek to our mind surpasses her in expression, in the charm of her glance and of her smile. Like all Levantines, the Greek lady (at least the Greek lady of Pera) is a great coquette; and she is so fond of finery, smart clothes and jewels, that she would sacrifice far higher pleasures to possess them. To get herself pretty *toilettes*, she would willingly let her family submit to certain sacrifices, and would deprive them of home comforts if her new bonnet or her new dress were at stake.

She adores showy, staring gowns that have a superabundance of trimming, huge bonnets, and dazzling parasols. Seeing her go past with that air of proud conviction, one can easily guess what supreme importance she attaches to all her frippery. She tries to terrify all humble souls into admiration. "It is not she but her toilette that takes the air." Yet she never doubts but that her own personal beauty is worth far more than all its elaborate setting. To such pretentiousness, then, to these constant efforts to elicit admiration, some of the dulness which reigns in the

Pera salons is due ; it is the heavy allied to the frivolous. The European, above all the Frenchman, is weary at watching this perpetual procession of demi-goddesses ; and he vaguely regrets the absence of some simpler nymph clad in plain garments, who trips it with light unaffected step.

To call the Greek woman a coquette, is to call her vain ; and in truth she possesses a good dose of vanity—even the humblest. A Greek servant would never deign to carry a parcel. Rather would she lose the best of places with a kind master and good wages than lower herself to such an indignity. We recollect the unfortunate experience of a French lady who soon after her arrival in Pera went out with her maid to buy a cabbage. Until that moment all had gone well ; but when it came to carrying the cabbage, the servant threw up her arms in horror, declaring that she was no common street-porter to carry parcels ! The lady unused to such Oriental touchiness, insisted, whereupon the fair Hellene ran off as fast as possible, leaving the unlucky vegetable in the arms of her mistress, who never again saw the fugitive.

As we are on the subject of Greek servants, let us here say that their reputation for honesty is none of the highest. Not only are they content with perquisites ; they also take a fancy to articles of dress—a handkerchief, a fan, a shawl. Some even make themselves beautiful with their mistress's jewels. O feminine coquetry ! what crimes are not committed in thy name ! The Greek maid servant is garrulous too—far more garrulous than any daughter of Eve is allowed to be. This may come from the language ; soft, fluent, harmonious as it is, it tempts one to be voluble. If you would have an idea of what the human mouth can achieve, listen to two Greek women telling each other an

interesting anecdote ; yet may Heaven save you from watching a brace of beldames wrangle ; such a tempest of harsh sounds was never heard !

In order to get a just idea of the diapason of these yelling puppets one should walk any evening through the Greek quarters in Smyrna, where one may see all the women outside their house doors, cackling ceaselessly at each other across the street ; magical sounds these to charm a poet's ear at the dreamy twilight hour ! Unwilling that our chapter should have so harsh and discordant a final note, let us admire the great tenderness which Greek mothers show towards their children ; let us praise them, too, for their patriotism. In this, they are no whit behind their husbands. Education will doubtless tend to remedy their defects, which for the most part are superficial ones.

It is from the Greeks, and notably in Pera, that the demi-monde draws its recruits. So developed in that city is the commercial instinct, that one easily comes to regard love as a stepping-stone to lucre. Yet if the morals of Greek shop girls in Constantinople leave something to be desired, travellers are unanimous in praising the chastity of the populations of the Morea, Attica and Thessaly. And yet many of the inhabitants of these districts are only ex-brigands, that from the time of their possessing a national Government, have settled down into being honest fathers of families. Thus the trade of brigandage has been less harmful for the nation than the corrupting life of Constantinople. It is these redoubtable bandits who have preserved for Greece her traditional honesty and energy, qualities needed for the regeneration of her sons who dwell on Turkish soil, depraved as they are by the corrupt pernicious atmosphere of Pera !

CHAPTER XIII.

THE JEWS IN TURKEY.—RE-EMIGRATION TO PALESTINE.—
SHADY TRICKS PLAYED UPON FOREIGNERS.—JEWS WITH
REAL AND SHAM NOSES.

THE Jews of the East in nowise resemble those Israelitish bankers, who, with their millions, dazzle the world of London, Paris, and Vienna. An axiom such as this needs no demonstration. They differ greatly even from the middle-class European Jews who make their living by usury on a modest scale. Nor have they anything in common with the handsome Hebrews of Algeria, notable for their stalwart form, resolute bearing, and noble mien.

The Turkish Jew has something slovenly, greasy, ill-smelling, and unbuttoned about him. Persecuted, trodden down as he has been for centuries, he has a servile, cringing, timid manner. While his co-religionists in the West have grown rich and respectable, he has remained in his poverty, a poverty that is only equalled by his ignorance. Such is the Jew of Constantinople; his appearance is only a trifle less filthy than that of the Jerusalem Jew. This last is a

sight, with his greasy pelisse and fur cap or soft felt hat, the legendary hat which seems to have reached the East by rolling along through all the drain-pipes of Europe. What gives this modern Hebrew such a comic look are two long tags of hair which droop like limp curlpapers on either side of his face. With young plump-cheeked Jews, these grotesque curls have the colour of barley-sugar, while they hang round the lantern jaws of their seniors like steel corkscrews, framing the huge nose and swart eyebrows that resemble those of some lugubrious punchinello.

If it be difficult to give an idea of the dirtiness of a Jerusalem Jew, it is quite impossible to describe the squalor of his dwelling-place—the very quintessence of filth and fetor. The narrow winding streets reek with offal and ordure of all kinds, exhaling noisome pestilential odours. Not even do the dogs, those public scavengers, venture to come into such streets; they are too filthy even for them. In some places, piles of muck stand which assuredly date from the time of that good man Job.

But let us leave Jerusalem where we found it and go back to Constantinople. The Jews are divided into two sects, the Caraites and the Talmudists, two communities that are sharply and effectually separated, first by their diversity of beliefs and then by the Golden Horn, which happily has placed half a kilometer of deep water betwixt them. We say “happily,” because these two sects cannot abide each other; indeed, one would eat the other up, if it could, which proves anyway that they have an excellent appetite and a stomach not easily troubled by trifles.

There are two colonies of Jews; those from Spain, who were driven thence by the Inquisition; and those imported

from Eastern Europe, the Achkinazim. The former speak a corrupt sort of Spanish, and the latter, bad German disfigured by an insufferable accent. The Spanish Jew colony is at Hasskeui, while the others live at Balata, on the outskirts of Stamboul.

The Constantinople Jew may be termed a jack-of-all-trades, except perhaps of those which need a certain expenditure of physical strength. Above all, he is a pedlar and colporteur. In all the towns of Turkey you will meet him with his basket, or flat, glass-lidded box slung round his neck. If you care to wait and watch them file past, you will see itinerant vendors of every kind of commodity, from fez to slippers, from pots to pencils. Some carry about Persian carpets, brass plates and embroidered shawls, the poorer sort sell old iron and buy empty boxes, while those who are sly and know their market, carry packets of obscene photographs for sale to such as can be tickled by such mental aphrodisiacs.

Many Jews play the housekeeper; and such patterns of docility are they, that their incorrigible dirtiness is excused. As bootblacks they also shine, and above all, as disciples of Pandarus. It is they who procure the ingenuous foreigner fair Circassians that have been "reserved" for some Pasha's harem; it is they who discover some Orient pearl imbedded in a German oyster-shell. It is they who for a few coins of gold would reveal to the inquisitive even a corner of Mahomed's paradise.

Under a pretext of conducting the foreigner to beauteous hours, most difficult of access, he is led about for an hour through a maze of narrow, winding streets, and finally brought by dark by-ways to a mysterious abode into which

he is introduced with all sorts of startling precautions. The house, needless to say, is only a common brothel. And the unfortunate tourist has to pay a hundred or two hundred francs for the same sort of pleasure which only costs the Perote five or ten shillings according to the tariff.

Indeed, in a case like this, imagination is all. The dirty, dismal room, with its vulgar furniture and petroleum lamp, becomes for the imaginative tourist the boudoir of an Eastern harem. In the rapacious hag who manages this frowsy establishment, he sees a wily duenna whom he must corrupt with gold, and the damsel who unbare her charms to his sight and touch, becomes for him a love-tortured odalisque struggling with all virgin modesty to conquer her reluctance. Be it noted that this sham virgin is always either a Greek or an Armenian girl who wraps a few yards of muslin round her body, from which she has not even removed the hair, as Turkish women always do. The impressionable foreigner, however, ignores this detail, and firmly believes that he clasps in his arms a shrinking, palpitating houri of the truest type. Perhaps, though, he has a moment of distrust and of suspicions when the rapacious hag, as she shows him out, says, "Sir, don't forget auntie!"

Not long ago, a Hungarian came to stay at one of the first hotels of Constantinople. Excellent as they are in many points, it is not exactly on the side of modesty that Hungarians err. They readily recognise themselves as the first nation in Europe and have profound belief in their extraordinary success with women. So our hero was not a whit surprised at being told by one of the Hebrew guides who haunt such hotels, that his curled moustachios had brought grievous

trouble to the heart of a fair Turkish lady of high degree. She solicited a rendezvous. At midnight he must go forth to it, armed to the teeth. Ah! what a romantic adventure was this—fit for the columns of a penny newspaper! Rain fell in torrents; the carriage creaked and jolted along down perilous defiles; it passed through obscure quarters peopled by desperadoes and cut-throats! (Hasskeui, the Jews' quarter, as it was afterwards known). About one o'clock in the morning the intrepid young Don Juan was with great secrecy brought into a lonely house. An old woman rushed to meet the newcomers and began a violent conversation with the guide, her words gaining emphasis by the gestures of terror with which they were accompanied. The dragoman thereupon informed his victim that the Pasha (it could only have been a Pasha) had not gone out as usual that evening; consequently one must wait until he fell asleep before the fair houri could escape.

The bold Hungarian deceiver was hidden behind a curtain while fearful fragments of phrases were whispered in his ear, such as: "Fierce Eunuch;" "The Bosphorus is deep;" "A sack filled with vipers." Then he was left alone in a dark room to meditate upon the dangers incurred by such Oriental conquests. Having remained in this heroico-comical situation for upwards of an hour, a light appeared, and the fair *hanoum* entered timidly, all trembling in her gauze drapery which floated round her like a cloud. Needless to say that our hero found a way to dispel the cloud, so winning the reward of all his sacrifices. Let us hope that the reward was worth them all; though in all likelihood young Jupiter of the Danube found his Danae of the Bosphorus all too prone to put a

literal interpretation upon the legend of the shower of gold.

A few days later he was astonished to see walking past his hotel door a young person conscientiously rouged and powdered, smirking and simpering in a European costume of the loudest type. He could not believe his eyes; yet they had not deceived him, it was no other than the mysterious odalisque, the Eastern enchantress. How had she fled from the harem? Why this disguise? As she went by, she shot a glance from her dark eyes at the hotel, while a smile played round her vermillion lips. Our hero was at a loss what to think, when he noticed that the glance and the smile were directed, not at him, but at the waiter of the hotel.

"Do you know that person?" he asked of the waiter, while vainly trying to check his heart-throbs.

"Oh! yes, I know her well enough, and others that are like her too. She is an Armenian girl, and lives with Madame Rosa. Don't you trust her, sir; the guides often make her play the Turkish woman to take in foreigners; but, if you care about it, I can get her for you for a medjidie."

O poetry of Oriental love! Thou, likewise, are naught but an illusion: like poetry, like love, like the East!

As stage managers of such little comedies as these, the Jew excels; we might call him the stage manager of International Mystery Plays. He will sell anything and everything, if he can only find somebody to buy; he is completely blind to the dishonourable nature of certain transactions. If asked to execute a commission of the most immoral sort, he willingly accepts, provided the price

of his services be duly fixed. In his eyes, any act is a fair and honest one, if only the payment for it be fair and honest too.

A friend told me that during the first weeks of his stay in Pera he was nightly pestered by gangs of Jews who importuned him with their indecent proposals. "Would the Baron like to be introduced to a Circassian, a Greek or an Armenian girl?" For the Jew, every foreigner is a Baron; it is a title exquisitely flattering to the dignity of commercial travellers and wholesale shopkeepers, and when a man is flattered, he is always more generous; *noblesse oblige*. Well, this friend, from sheer curiosity, if not from the devil within him, let one of these Jews take him to a Turkish beauty who, unfortunately for her, knew no other Oriental language but Italian. But there was no possibility of retreat; the Rubicon had been crossed. When it came to paying the price of the entertainment, our friend let a ten paras piece (equivalent to one half-penny) fall on the floor. Next day at dawn, he found the Jew standing at the door of his hotel with the missing coin in his hand.

"It was not worth while troubling about," said the master to his virtuous servant.

"Nay, but the Baron does not know me," answered the latter, drawing himself up to his full height. "I never keep money except that which I have honestly earned."

He said this in all sincerity, for the profession of pander has nothing low or degrading about it for Jews. A father destines his son at quite an early age for this lucrative trade. So, at night one may see the big sharks walking with the little sharks, the former being vastly proud of the prowess of their offspring.

Jewesses have quite as much talent for this sort of business as their sires. In waters where the shark swims, the naiads, too, disport themselves. In the East, it is a recognised fact that no young and lovely Jewess ever resists a serenade, to the *obbligato* accompaniment of *louis d'or*. If her virtue be dear to her, dearer yet shall she prove for her seducers.

Despite his humble, obsequious air, despite the elastic nature of his conscience, the Jew at heart keeps all the rigour of his religious beliefs, and shows a stubborn attachment to the traditions of his race. It is rare for a Jew to become a convert; indeed, a Hebrew is quite as great a fanatic as a Mussulman. But his zeal is stifled, gagged by fear; if he hates the Christian much, he dreads him yet more. His intolerance is limited to breaking crosses where none can see him, to throwing filth at night time outside the doors of churches, or to parodying Catholic ceremonies in his own home.

Such pitiable acts of mimicry and spite should not cause surprise, remembering, as one must, what awful, atrocious persecutions the Jews had to suffer for centuries. Outlaws, beggars, and treated like the worst of criminals, they had hardly the right to live and possess a family or a home. It was the grand inquisitors and their most Christian majesties of Europe who trampled on the Jewish race and made it vile. And to-day in many countries such odious persecution exists. There are towns where Jews are pursued with sticks and stones, and where they would be hung if the authorities did not interfere. In Roumania, the people demand the expulsion of the Jews; at Pesth we ourselves saw the populace assail them with stones; and in Russia,

the ignorant peasantry are for burning them all at the stake. We Frenchmen can hardly realize such abominable cruelty ; and it is a great honour for our nation to have set Jews upon the same footing as that of other citizens. What a difference, too, between the Paris Jews and those of other cities or countries ! So used are we to exercise religious tolerance that we make no difference between a Jew, a Catholic or a Calvinist. The title of Frenchman supersedes all others ; and we no more bear a grudge against a man because he is an Israelite than because he has red hair, or no hair at all. Why should we be put out at all by such simple qualificatory adjectives ?

On the contrary, in certain countries, the Jews are in such disfavour, and so implacably harrassed, that they occasionally pretend to be of another religion. I have known Germans, Viennese, Servs, who for eight or ten years acted a diurnal comedy so as not to confess themselves to be sons of Moses. In Hungary the hostility to Hebrews is so great, that it has had a political result which was quite unexpected. Can it be believed that, in this country which boasts, not without a reason, of its liberal ideas, the Chamber of Lords should have refused to establish the validity of civil marriage ! It fears in this way to allow wealthy Israelites to wed Christian maidens of good family. And at the present time, marriages in Hungary are as much the monopoly of the clergy as they were in the eighteenth century. In face, then, of such persistent and implacable hostility, the Jews have thought it politic to abandon their distinctive surnames. So farewell to such names as Levy, Aaron, Goldstein, Kaufmann, Solomon, etc. They now adopt Hungarian surnames of the most

irreproachable sort, with a true Christian ring about them. Some have even made modifications in their national character. They pretend to be openhanded and generous, lend money without interest, give princely *pourboires*, and "lash out their silver penny" like any lord. But such prodigality as this is all a sham, a take-in; scratch but these Mæcenas of stucco and you will find the Hebrew with his shameless greed. Do what he may, the Jew will ever be betrayed by two things: the nose and the eye; the nose with its hooked shape like the beak of a bird of prey, and the eye with its oblique look, a sort of double ray, a ray which looks and a ray which seems to look. Since the recent persecutions which have taken place in Russia, Austria, Hungary, Germany and Roumania, many Jews have emigrated, seeking an asylum of refuge in the cradle of their race, at Palestine, Jerusalem, Jaffa and elsewhere.

No one can deny to the Jew his intelligence and finesse; he has veritable genius for trade, above all, for trade in precious metals. He is gentle, obsequious, and courteous towards the fair sex. Pride of family is in him strongly developed; but his most praiseworthy trait is his devotion to his co-religionists. Despite his cupidity, he is charitable and readily loosens his purse-strings when the poor and infirm of his race need succour. He will make great sacrifices, too, if schools or benevolent establishments have to be maintained. The rich thus constantly aid the poor, and thus put into practice the most Utopian teachings of the socialists.

The Jewish community of Constantinople, despite its feeble resources, is the best administered and the best regulated of all the "nations" which dwell in this vast

city. The Hebrew colony has the best schools and the most active and energetic philanthropic associations.

Such results are in a great measure due to the *Alliance Israelite Universelle*, an admirable institution, which not only carries out its charitable programme, but which likewise undertakes the more difficult task of the regeneration of the race. In the entire Levant, in Egypt, in Algeria, and Morocco, the Alliance has rendered signal service. At Constantinople it has started French and German schools, the teachers in these being earnest, hard-working enthusiasts. Each establishment is kept up by the wealthiest members of the Jewish colony, who subscribe handsome sums for their maintenance. At Jaffa, the Alliance has founded a practical school of agriculture, which to emigrant Jews will prove a most valuable institution. For, if the Hebrew rarely tills the earth, that is not to say that he is incapable of turning agriculturist. The truth is, that for many centuries he has never been suffered to possess in safety the lands that were his. Shut out, too, from trade corporations, he has mainly devoted himself to usury, to traffic with money. But recent examples permit one to affirm that the latter-day Hebrews, descendants of the old shepherds of Judah, will know well how to turn to account this fair land of Canaan, which Turkish negligence has suffered to lie fallow. The olive, vine, fig, nut, and banana all flourish in Palestine ; so, too, does the sugar cane, while the orange trees rival those of Cyprus and Algiers.

We have just spoken of a nation that is dispersed ; and to these remarks let us add a few words concerning another wandering race well-known in the East, the gipsies or *Tchinganes*, as the Turks call them. They are mostly of

low stature but well-formed, and their attitudes at times are of surprising grace. They have intelligent faces, full of spirit and vivacity, and the women in their youth may claim to be called pretty. But both sexes live in a state of extreme dirtiness ; their cottages are no more than filthy huts built with broken planks, and patched up with rags or paper. Here men and animals live in the most extraordinarily promiscuous fashion. The inner circle of the walls of Stamboul is decorated by rows of such squalid hovels, which makes one think how exquisitely apt is the Eastern motto that meets the eye on every wall and at every turn—*Commit no nuisance*, etc. . . .

The gipsies are, above all things, horsemongers, letting out horses for hire in the public streets. Everywhere you may see them leading their proudly caparisoned chargers, and touting for clients in the most noisy and persistent fashion. The horses are good beasts, gentle and sure-footed as a rule ; but perpetual riding ruins them, and they are but the wrecks of what were once serviceable mounts. They are always saddled and bridled, by night as by day, and occasionally they sleep standing at a street corner. Twice daily they are fed on a few handfuls of chopped straw, and sometimes they get a little barley. Hay is a luxury unknown to them. One should not forget that at Constantinople carriages can only pass through a few of the main streets, so that one is often obliged to have recourse to these poor, jaded quadrupeds. The Tchinganés treat their beasts kindly, and delight to dress them up with ornaments of glass or amulets stuck on their harness.

The women sell lavender and herbs ; they tell fortunes ; sing ; clap their hands, and beat the tambourine. . Some of

them dance in the manner of Egyptian dancing girls, and their most sprightly sign of satisfaction at your liberality, is to stick the piastres you give them on to their foreheads or their throats with spittle. They ask nothing better than to sell their charms for cash ; and at a most moderate rate, too. I remember hearing a pretty gipsy girl tell an old Turk, who was pestering her on the Karakeuy Bridge, "I am game ; only, if you go with me, as I am pretty, you'll have to give me a hundred paras (about eightpence). The line rose to my lips : *Ces filles de Bohème ont le cœur généreux !* Generous, indeed ; for what will they not give you for eightpence ?

The race shows no sign of possessing religious beliefs. Each tribe recognises the authority of a chief whose power appears to be absolute. Children get no education whatever, but learn to beg as soon as they can walk ; when they grow older, they add yet other accomplishments, such as the adroit theft of fruit from orchards or of pullets from farm-yards. Take them all in all, they are marauders, unpleasant, disagreeable if you will, but not dangerous criminals. Then, in a picture, how effective they are !

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LEVANTINES ; OR THE WEST IN THE EAST.—THE BOARDS OF
GREEN CLOTH IN PERA.—STUCCO FINANCE AND PASTE-
BOARD ARISTOCRACY.

HITHERTO we have spoken of the purely Eastern elements of the Constantinople population. We now pass on to deal with imported races, with nationalities not of pure metal but that contain alloy. These are the European colonies, formerly classed under the generic name of Franks ; hence the appellation "Frankish quarter," "Frankish time," "Frankish style," etc.

Besides the two main elements, Oriental and European, there is a third element, the Levantine. One is not yet agreed as to the exact application of the name. We are, however, of opinion that the term Levantine should be given to everyone born of a European family that is resident and definitely settled in the East.

The Levantine is proud of his European descent, and would not for the world have you confound him with the Greeks and Armenians, whom he calls "natives." As regards himself, it would be rather difficult to define his

origin. Many claim a sort of approximate descent from old Italian, French, Hungarian and Slav families. As we have already said, they all more or less do things as the Greeks do ; and Greek is the language that they speak at home among themselves. But in public they talk French, that being the language of the best society.

The inhabitants of Pera, Perotes as they are called, are, generally speaking, Levantines. The rest of the population consists of Greeks, Armenians, and Europeans who are not yet Orientalised. The Levantine it is who gives the tone to the others and who controls the manners of this composite troupe.

He has the qualities and the defects of the different nations amid whom he lives ; nor in many respects does he differ from the inhabitants of a small provincial town. He poses, is affected and very vain ; his mind is small and his judgment, narrow ; he treats trifles as if they were matters of importance, and is wholly indifferent to things of the utmost beauty. Thus Pera is like a little provincial town, with all its prejudice, ignorance, inquisitiveness and spite.

Though there are perhaps fifty or sixty thousand inhabitants in Pera and its suburbs, "Perote society," so called, only counts some thousand or twelve hundred persons. This limited body takes upon itself to be a faithful reflex of European manners and customs as they exist on the banks of the Bosphorus. The Levantine is full of pretensions, and gives himself tremendous airs. Disdaining the servility of the Greek or the Armenian, he affects on the other hand an air of boorish presumption which he believes to be dignity. For this reason he is little beloved by the

"natives," while to bonâ-fide Europeans he is simply insufferable.

To keep up this part of a superior being, and in order to play it satisfactorily, he has to have recourse to false swagger, and to trying to impress others with a sense of his quality. In a land like this, where all is deception and counterfeit, the great art of dust-throwing must never be neglected. So he flings dust audaciously in the eyes of all, and invents stories that might even astonish a horse-marine. The high opinion he has of his own importance as a European makes him fashion's slave. If caught doing or wearing something not quite *chic*, he would be covered with confusion. And so the Pera dandy is a third-rate imitation of the Paris dandy;—just as ridiculous, though not nearly so well-dressed. Tailors who know their clients' weakness, make them pay tremendous prices for their smart clothes, which are rarely well-cut and usually of shoddy. All the same, the prices charged are those of the best Paris or London tailor. If they had a turn for French verse-making, they could rhyme *Péra* with *opéra*, never omitting the most important rhyme of all: *paiera*.

In this petty Oriental city, just as in the meanest of provincial towns, folk spend their time in criticising each other and in saying all sorts of spiteful things. Towards anyone who essays to get beyond the usual dead level, no pity is shown, but there is rejoicing over one sinner that slips lower in the mud, as his fall sets the mediocrity of the others in relief, and seems to raise them somewhat in their own esteem. Every man would deem his day lost, unless ere night came he had been able to backbite somebody; and a Perote lady's main occupation consists in collecting,

sorting, and repeating the spiteful speeches of her friends. Most of this drawing-room twaddle is very poor stuff ; void of point or of wit ; the chatter of midwives or of washer-women ; just as vulgar and just as dull. That comes from the astounding poverty of ideas, which is the natural result of the Levantine's profound ignorance. In his youth, he may have had an entirely superficial education, an education soon cut short, and from which he got very little profit. His stock-in-trade consists mainly of a smattering of modern languages at which he is fluent enough, though he has never read any standard authors, either French Italian or German. And his talk has the ring of a manual of conversation about it,—a sort of Ollendorffian grace :

“ Have you the fine hat of your worthy brother ? ”

“ No ; but I have seen the pretty hammer of the aged carpenter.”

The Levantine takes little or no interest in reading ; high-toned local journals and reviews do not exist ; and at *soirées* or parties one rarely or never meets a distinguished artist, a man of learning or of letters. The theatre is still in a rudimentary state. Occasionally Italian or French companies come to Pera to play in opera or in opera-bouffe. They never attempt high comedy—that section of dramatic art which most develops the mental faculties and refines the taste.

This intellectual poverty of the Perote causes him to care little about education or its uses ; a professor, in his eyes, is a tradesman like anybody else ; more exacting maybe, than the baker ; less dear, though, than the tailor. If he wants to praise exuberantly, he will never say : “ He is a man of great talent,” but exclaim with enthusiasm, “ I have

seen him spend as much as ten pounds in one day ! ” To all finer pleasures of the mind he is callous, as well as to any in which he can have no part. I would strongly advise no lecturer to try his fortune in such a place as Pera. Even the greatest artists, a Rubinstein or a Sarasate would find it hard to give a concert and make it pay, unless they were backed up by their respective embassies, when Her Excellency Madame this or that would send round tickets for the entertainment, and everybody would fear to affront her by refusing to buy them.

In Pera, the man of title is an article highly appreciated, even though he have neither hair nor teeth. Levantines doat upon crests and coats of arms. This is the place to send a complete stock of seedy baronets and third-rate lords ; on the heights above the Golden Horn they would be eagerly welcomed by smiling lips and radiant eyes. “ Viscount Slooperton has just been here. ” “ We went out driving with the Marchioness of Muddleplate ! ” “ Lord Lucifer Linnethead is coming to dinner ! ” What music resides in phrases such as these ! How they act like a balm ; delicious words that are a joy to utter ! Besides their success socially, these young noblemen stand a good chance of wedding some wealthy Levantine damsel, who is willing to regild their tarnished coat of arms with some of the gold supplied by her dear, vulgar, wealthy papa.

In the East, the romance of every day that yet awaits the novelist is the romance that tells how the father of the family came to Turkey without shoes to his feet and with scarcely a rag to his back. He started life there by carrying on all sorts of petty trades until he could manage to traffic in filthy lucre also ; in fact, until he could turn

usurer. At this trade he made a pretty fortune. The dream of his eldest daughter is to be a countess, and, if possible, a marchioness. Money she has got; it is not that which tempts her; it is a name, a title. Always remember that she has no ancestors. She has a father, it is true, but a father cannot count as an ancestor; at the most he is the beginner of a pedigree.

Often alas! in society like this, at once lax and intolerant, sham noblemen, stucco counts, and aluminium dukes get a place. But what does that matter? Who cares to dispute their right to the titles they bear, or to examine their patents of nobility?

"Come to my arms, my noble son-in-law!"

What comes, then, from such marriages, where shady finance weds bric-a-brac nobility? The bridegroom lets his wife cover herself from top to toe with coats of arms, and put huge coronets on all the plates and chairs, while he is delighted at being able to lead his old life of spendthrift and gambler. To do things on a grand scale is rather difficult in Pera, though all there is in keeping with the rest. No race courses; no ballet girls of the Grand Opéra, no *Café de la Paix*; no *Restaurant des Ambassadeurs*; nothing of that sort; but there are always the girls who sing at music-halls to be debauched, or orgies to be held in any cheap brothel. If pleasure of this kind be somewhat vulgar, there is the board of green cloth, and by gambling one may go to the devil just as fast as ever one likes.

Pera, be it known, is filled with gambling hells. In the Grand' Rue, the centre street of the whole town, there are some twenty or thirty roulette tables. Sometimes you find three or four in a row. The proprietors are wary enough

and know how to keep their little business dark. The ground-floors of such houses are occupied by shops of the most respectable sort; the rooms above are let to worthy lodgers; but there is one little apartment somewhere at the back which is lived in by Mr X or by Madame Z. Most evenings, he or she entertains a few friends; and anyone is a friend, if he have but a few pounds in his pocket and know the password. In such mysterious sanctuaries, worshippers assemble to adore the goddess Roulette, whose high priests are Baccarat and Poker. No fear of the police, for the domicile of Europeans is sacred and inviolable.

Moreover, the Turkish authorities would never try to put down the private hells, since they tolerate the public ones. Go into any music-hall, you will see five or six gloomy-looking individuals drinking mastic or beer, and listening to the lugubrious wailing of some lugubrious lady, styled in the bills "Marquise de P——— and whose reputation is as threadbare as her voice. How can such establishments pay, you ask, for the executants are more numerous than the—executed? Evidently this is a problem not to be solved at first sight. But it is a very simple problem. If you glance round the hall you will discover a little door against which in silhouette is seen a man, who looks the very type of a spy. Go boldly through it and you will join a crowd of people standing round a roulette-table. People of all classes and all nationalities are there; and with haggard faces and bloodshot eyes they stop in this stifling, tobacco-poisoned atmosphere till dawn, when they drink a *plevna* or two, just to settle their nerves before going to bed. A *plevna* is a mixture of vermouth, rum, and

lemon juice ; in default of this delightful drink, they swallow the yolk of an egg in a glassful of curaçoa. It is the roulette that pays for the violinists and all their twingle-twangle in the outer or concert room. Music is the pretext, while gambling is the reason, for such temples of sound. The orchestra is a bore sometimes, and the big drum often shakes the nerves of some more sensitive gambler. If one could but have music-halls without any music, how delightful that would be !

One beerseller, both intelligent and thrifty, was content to place an old cracked piano in his tavern ; and he engaged a man for modest wage to thump upon it all night without ceasing. He thereupon styled himself *impresario*, and wrote over the door of his beer-shop "Concert Lyrique." Then he added a roulette-table ; and the trick was done. An ingenious way, this, of paying for the hire of his piano, was it not ?

The police respects all these pickpockets, and the Government alone in order to show its solicitude and regard for its Ottoman subjects forbids all wearers of the fez to enter these temples of vice. Nevertheless this protective measure is no more respected than others of its kind. Turks come in to listen to the music, thrust their fez into their pocket and walk bareheaded into the gambling-room. But they must above all things beware of a big moustachioed long-shanked fellow, dressed sometimes like a gendarme and sometimes like a civilian or a cavalry-sergeant. He is put there to spy upon such naughty Turkish officials as wander from the paths of virtue and stray into these dens of vice. Next day he recommends them to the tender mercies of His Highness the Grand Vizier.

Besides these hells, public and private, there are clubs, both respectable and expensive, where the gathering of gamblers is more select, and where the play is higher. We know of a club in Pera whose members many of them live entirely by their luck at poker and baccarat. They make as much as fifteen hundred and two thousand a year. An enterprising person has used the bright idea of asking for the Turkish Government's permission to make a Monte Carlo of one of the Princes' Islands, which is situated at about an hour's distance from Constantinople. The island itself is a charming one; the climate is salubrious; there are pleasant walks and drives, and it is perhaps destined to become the Monaco of European Turkey. Many pretty villas have already been built there, and even a few paltry casinos. When Constantinople shall be connected by express train with Pesth, Vienna, Berlin, and Petersburg, we shall see Greeks and Wallachians, Russians and Hungarians flocking to this Eden in the sea. It would be a clever idea to draw them thither by a gambling establishment, which should replace Spa, Homburg and Baden when Western prudery suppresses these centres of iniquity.

The Turkish Government so far has refused to let itself be seduced, despite the millions held out to dazzle its eyes. The *ulemas* have declared gambling to be immoral, but they have not counted upon the omnipotent influence of *bak-sheesh* which will, sooner or later, one day serve to silence the scruples of the older Mussulmans. "Let the Christians ruin themselves if they will!"

The Levantine who has grown rich by usury or by shady tricks of some sort, has no very tender conscience. If he is pitiless as regards the little absurdities of his associates,

he is most indulgent as regards their acts of—well, let us say, of indelicacy. He has the true spirit of the financier who will never forgive a trifling error of two francs, but who with gaping mouth will frankly admire a regular good fraud to the tune of two hundred thousand francs.

A father of a family, a retired banker and a millionaire, learns that his son has run heavily into debt. This constitutes the primary cause of his displeasure. But there is something worse still. The degenerate son, in order to satisfy his rapacious creditors borrows money at the rate of forty per cent. At this, the righteous father and quondam banker feels thoroughly indignant. He sends for the young prodigal and ends his lecture thus: "At all events, if you're such a fool as to borrow money at the rate of forty per cent. you might go for choice to your father instead of filling the pockets of some harpy of a Jew!"

One can imagine how the young Levantines, brought up on such theories turn out. Ignorant and vain, they lead a life of vulgar debauchery, a life in which there is neither illusion for the senses nor gaiety for the heart, a life void of originality as of wit; while their notion of squandering is to fling sovereigns out of the window in handfuls, as if to proclaim the fact that money was no object. Levantine families bitterly complain that the young men desert the circles of good society, that marriages become every day more rare, that matches once made always prove unfortunate. But have they ever troubled to train their children carefully, to give them ideas and tastes that might serve to raise and refine them intellectually? Far from it. They have only dinned this axiom into their ears. "All can be done by money; thus all must be done to get money."

Again, does the young Levantine woman do anything towards keeping her husband at home? Her ruling passion is dress, to which she sacrifices all. When she walks out she is loaded with jewels and lace. At home, she disdains to dress herself neatly, or even decently. She looks as though she had just jumped out of bed. Everything dangles and droops about her; her touzled, unkempt hair; her flabby, pendulous breasts, her half fastened skirts and slippers down at heel;—it all suggests a weeping willow! So she spends her day curled up on a divan which fits into a bow-window overlooking the street. Now and again she sips a cup of coffee, nibbles at a bon-bon or drinks a glass of water, smoking all the while countless cigarettes. In reading she takes no interest whatever; she knows nothing about new books or new journals of fashion; needle-work or fancy-work fatigues her; and the house-keeping is left entirely to the servants. If friends come, they help her to kill time with their empty, frivolous talk, for they can neither converse about theatres, concerts, novels, nor sermons; so they have to drag on their dreary gossip about trifles, and get up an interest in the price of tomatoes or the size of a flounce. How to kill time; a Levantine's whole life is given up to solving that problem! Such a hollow, artificial existence as this cannot fail to blunt the mind. Life becomes a series of half-worries and half-pleasures while, from a material point of view, it does not even offer the compensation of a comfortable home. To satisfy her craving for dress, the young wife denies to her house a thousand necessities. The furniture is either scanty or in a most shabby state, while the table is ill-appointed and ill-kept. If, some Sunday, you should meet

two shopkeepers with their wives, examine their get-up ; and you are sure to find that the husband has seedy linen and shoddy clothes. The young Levantine wife however, displays a profusion of rings and bracelets, while large brilliants dangle from her ears.

Mean, vicious, selfish as he is, the Levantine is incapable of doing aught towards reviving or regenerating the East. He is powerless to effect progress of any kind ; and to the decay that surrounds him he is totally indifferent. He is quite happy in that he has given to his neighbourhood a coat of European whitewash ; he believes that, therewith, he has transformed Turkey ; and he will willingly call Pera " a miniature Paris."

CHAPTER XV.

EUROPEANS IN PERA.—“THE PENITENTIARY COLONIES.”—
WOES OF THE PERA LANDLORD.—WHY THE EUROPEAN
CONTINGENT IS REDUCED.

WHY do Europeans visit the East? What do they come to do there? Many things. Some (the more fortunate, these) travel thither to visit this matchless land and spend a fortnight of enchantment in mosques and bazaars, in floating up and down the lovely Bosphorus and in studying Asiatic types and costumes. If chance favour them, they may even be able to penetrate into one or two of the marvellous palaces which for the public are always difficult of access. Then they depart, enraptured with their stay, declaring that the East is the most beautiful part of God's world and that the inhabitants of Constantinople are far too richly favoured in being able to inhabit such a paradise. Their sole cause for regret is that they have been disgracefully fleeced; and they furthermore admit that, after two weeks' stay, they have not yet managed to understand the intricacies of Turkish time and Turkish money. These

favourites of fortune have been able to realise their day dreams. Let us have regard for their happiness. For them, the East is still an earthly paradise.

Other Europeans there are who came to Pera to try their luck at a time when Turkey still had wealth and vitality. To this class belong merchants, contractors, teachers, professors, and petty tradesmen. Many of them have succeeded in "making their pile"; but the good time has gone for doing that, now; and they bitterly regret it. They grumble at the stagnant state of business, at the general decay of the country, at the villainous administration of those in office, at the dishonesty of native creditors. In brief, they heap a thousand curses upon the East, and upon themselves, for having had the unlucky idea of coming thither. For them, the East is nothing short of Purgatory.

Finally, there is a more numerous, more restless class of Europeans. These are they who made their own country too hot to hold them, either by theft, by fraudulent bankruptcy, or by some flagrant outrage upon public morals. They all came to Constantinople without a penny in their pockets, and plunge into this cosmopolitan rabble, to hide themselves and get their living there. For such people as these, the East becomes Hell.

Among such strange types, one meets bigamists, trigamists, men of ambition who have failed, decayed sons of decayed families, political refugees, unfrocked priests, gentlemen too light of finger for Europe, deserters, adventurers, and ruined merchants. Pell-mell, one encounters honourable men who have come to grief, and impudent rogues. The former try to hide their misery,

the latter, their degradation. All alike are in search of their daily beefsteak ; and nearly all, be it said, succeed in obtaining it. For if living for the tourist be extremely dear, for the resident it is astonishingly cheap. With just a few piastres, a man can pay for his wants of the day. He can get a furnished room for ten or twelve shillings a month, and a fairly decent dinner for ninepence.

But, be it noted, if one can live in Turkey with a little money, that little money is hard to earn in a country where industry and agriculture do not exist ; where there are no public works, where commerce and banking remain concentrated in the hands of Armenians and Greeks. Since the great smash, everyone cuts down his expenses, reduces the staff of his servants or of his clerks, and hermetically seals his purse. What is the poor devil of a European to do, seeing that he knows neither Greek nor Turkish ? It needs all his fertility of resource and his unwearying activity to pull him along. Perhaps he sets up as a house agent or furniture broker for new comers ; perhaps he will take to selling European goods, wines, sausages or cheese ; perhaps he will give lessons in sciences, languages or arts, of which very likely he himself is ignorant. But above all, he will learn how to put into practice those rules from the Grand Money Lender's Manual. In no city has the game of "Beggar my Neighbour" reached such a pitch of perfection. There are people who live in Pera that for years have never possessed so much as a five-franc piece on which there was no mortgage. Wonderful is their instinct for borrowing from Peter to pay Paul ; and they have brought the principle of the divisability of credit to its highest possible pitch.

Always be on your guard if you go out into the street. In ten minutes or so you will meet a friend more or less known to you who overwhelms you with professions of his friendship and attachment. Button up your pockets, for this explosion of cordiality is aimed at your purse. Should you seem unmoved by this gushing prelude, he will redouble the warmth of his avowals, reducing at the same time the amount of his demand. I once met a species of German baron, frightfully hard up, who, after having tried to borrow the loan of ten pounds from me, was eventually content to accept the loan of ten *paras*, or one halfpenny, wherewith to cross the Bridge of Stamboul. Others, less ambitious, will try, in default of getting money out of you, to make you offer them wine. With exquisite pleasantry they will take up the bottle in front of you and pour themselves out a bumper. At my *table d'hôte*, a facetious chubby-faced Styrian used to play the game of gallantly draining the glass of his fair neighbour!

Pera then has its Bohemia, full of recruits drawn from the Bohemias of all the other countries. One may see them any evening playing their game of dominoes, while the luckless tavern-keeper gloomily tots up the sums due to him by his faithful customers. All these needy cosmopolitans, with a shady past and a misty future, never fail to pick each other to pieces with mutual energy. There is no sense of compatriotism which binds them together; but each wishes to adorn his brows with a halo of purity, and to relegate the rest to the category of reprobates. "Such a person is a dangerous swindler." "That man there is a bad lot; he lives with his niece!" "This fellow is a spy in the pay of the police!" If a discussion is started, you

see the disputants draw revolvers from their pockets ; but the business rarely gets beyond a brawl followed by mutual head-punchings, after which those present declare honour to have been satisfied ; and everybody is turned out of doors.

A malicious old fogey once called the European colonies in Pera, "the penitentiary colonies." The term was not quite a just one, for often in this heterogeneous centre there are more of the sinned against to be found than of the sinning. But the miseries of daily life bring all to the same level of selfishness and malice.

What draws all these pariahs of society to Constantinople is the great liberty which all foreigners enjoy in Turkey. The European's domicile is sacred ; though he be thief or assassin, the police dare not enter his house without proper authorisation from the consul empowered to give it. If anyone is arrested by the police, he can at once appeal to his ambassador to release him. There are no duties and no taxes to pay in Turkey, neither to the treasury nor to the municipality. Do you wish to start a business or open a shop ? You need no authorisation to do this ; there are no patents, no licenses. The Government does not busy itself about you, provided you do not busy yourself about it.

If you take legal proceedings, the case is heard before your consular tribunal, and you are judged according to the laws of your own country. Your consul becomes at once your judge, your notary, your lawyer and your mayor. And thus the European in the East is a redoubtable personage ; in everything he has the advantage over the native. They dub him playfully *chapkalé adâm*, the man with the hat ; but it is the hat that now takes the lead of the fez.

The European has his postal and telegraph offices, his

quarter is lighted by gas and has all modern European improvements such as an underground tunnel to connect Galata with Pera, tramways from Galata to Chichli, etc., etc. He has also the simulacra of amusements; nowhere else would he enjoy such independence. He has even the privilege of not paying his rent, for a clause, all too charitable, in Ottoman law forbids a landlord to expel his insolvent lodgers. If the lodger does not pay, the landlord begs him to be so kind as to go; he will even pay him a premium in order to induce him to quit the premises. Sometimes he will push his unselfishness to the point of hiring another apartment, and of asking him to occupy it. This law, which for debtors is such a godsend, gives rise occasionally to most curious incidents.

A European, who owned a large house near the Anglican Church, had let the ground-floor of it to certain of his compatriots; and they soon deemed it wholly unnecessary to pay their rent. The landlord used every means to make his imperturbable tenants quit the premises, but these worthy folk declared that the apartments suited them literally down to the ground, and that they really intended to stay. So the situation remained for some weeks, when the rabid landlord believed that he had hit upon a trick that should rid him of the intruders. Profiting one Sunday by their absence in the country, he put a padlock on the door of the apartment, and nailed boards across the windows and shutters. The lodgers, on their return, gave vent to demoniacal rage, declaring that their youngest daughter, a tender girl of five summers, had been barbarously shut up in the apartment! Though difficult to believe, this was actually the case. The landlord hastened

to set his youthful prisoner free ; but too late. The family had attested the presence of the little girl in one of the barricaded rooms, and accordingly sued the landlord for damages at the Consular Court. And, would you believe it ? the poor man, who had met with scant luck all round, was sentenced to a year's imprisonment for the "sequestration of a minor" !

Landlords have thus grown extremely prudent, and candidates for lodgings have to find a *kefil*, or security for their solvability and good conduct, who will declare them to be honest lodgers. Naturally, no one is in a hurry to go bail in this way, and a thousand reasons are found for shirking such responsibility, so that newcomers often cannot get a roof to shelter them for weeks together.

Another anecdote. A venerable doctor was bothered by his hall porter and by the wife of this functionary who discharged the important duties of cook. The recalcitrant couple lived in the porter's lodge, and this lodge, as it seems, was a charmingly airy place. The doctor, exasperated, determined to drive the guilty pair from their earthly paradise. But, more sly than their ancestors Adam and Eve, the porter and his spouse refused to go. They affectionately declared that they could never leave so good a master nor abandon so excellent a lodge. The knowing doctor had to resort to stratagem, and having by some pretext lured them out of the house, he installed their successors in their absence. Imagine what a furious quartet was later performed by this pair of Boxes and Coxes ! Indeed, the police found it so moving, that they had to interfere.

The deplorable state of business in Turkey and the in-

creasing number of failures have singularly reduced the European contingent. Many needy adventurers, finding no occupation, have returned to their mother country. On the other hand, those nababs who came to Turkey at the propitious moment now desert it. Certain colonies, and notably the French colony, have diminished by a half or two-thirds. These departures have been one of the causes of the famous smash; they were also brought about by fear of the acts of horrible cruelty which the Turks would commit when the day came of their final fall. Already in the last war, when the Russians reached San Stefano, the Europeans of Constantinople were all in mortal fear. It was everywhere rumoured that the Mussulmans intended to massacre the Christians and these latter fled from Pera to hide themselves in the neighbouring villages, principally in such places as were near the Russian army. The same fears prevail to-day, and all is to be dreaded from the ferocity of the Osmanli on that day when he sees Constantinople escape for ever from his grasp.

Fears such as these are not puerile; and they ought to be taken into consideration by the Great Powers who have assumed the task of settling the painful Eastern question. We know for a fact that in the last war, certain young Turkish patriots had resolved to blow up St Sophia, the moment the Czar's army entered the streets of Stamboul. Others purposed to set fire to the whole city, most of which is built of wood, and so renew for Muscovites the horrors of the burning of Moscow. Nor let us forget that, from a Mussulman point of view, the strangling of infidels is a pious work, and a sure means of gaining a place in heaven.

These are hypotheses which deserve attention. They

fix a fearful responsibility upon that nation or, on those nations who shall succeed in laying hands upon this worm-eaten Byzantium. To protect the lives of Christians in the East ; to preserve the masterpieces of Byzantine art ; what a hazardous mission is this for a conqueror ! May the future spare us a repetition, on the banks of the Bosphorus, of the infamous bombardment of Alexandria.

Let us turn our thoughts, however, from the future to the present. It is not only the apprehension of a coming catastrophe which causes Europeans to leave Constantinople. What discourages them is the ill-will of the authorities, with their insufferable exactions and their stubborn opposition to all progress. To those vices of the Turks, the faults have to be added of the Europeans themselves who can neither unite nor concert together to make an opening in the inert masses. It is this which we shall endeavour to show by a study of the two chief colonies of the East, the German and the French. To you, *Messieurs les Teutons*, I cede the place of honour !

CHAPTER XVI.

PROGRESS OF GERMANY IN THE EAST.—GENERALS AND
MINISTERIAL COUNCILLORS.—GERMAN SOCIETY AND
GERMAN SOCIETIES.

GERMAN influence in the East only dates from the year 1870; it sprang from our trouble and disaster. Turkey, which feels herself impotent and threatened, has ever been in search of a power in Europe upon which she might lean. She had for long sought and enjoyed the friendship of France, and of this I think she could have had little to complain. When our ambassador spoke, all Turkey gave ear to his voice. If he paid a visit to the Sultan, the whole town was in a stir; the papers were filled with details of the event and comment was rife concerning it. Our country, it may justly be said, held a privileged position in the East.

But all has changed since then. Turkish statesmen thought that France after so many grievous disasters would prove a less powerful protectress than heretofore. Germany had acquired the military preponderance in Europe;

so they unhesitatingly turned their back upon former alliances, and flung themselves into the arms of the conqueror. It was as a consequence of this conversion that the Sublime Porte began to Germanise its official world. Thus, by a series of sad calamities and unpardonable errors, Germany supplanted us in the administration of Ottoman affairs, just as to-day England expels half the French officials and instals ill-bred children in their vacant chairs !

Turkey asked Prussia to supply her with officers ; for she thought that her army, if re-organised by instructors with their laurels yet thick about them, would surely become invincible. Perhaps, too, she naïvely cherished some secret hope of a Turco-German alliance against the eternal enemy, Russia. We have already explained what those reasons were which hindered the Prussian envoys from succeeding in their mission. It was the Porte itself, which after soliciting their aid, did all it could to paralyse their efforts. They were suffered to do nothing ; and yet to-day their inactivity is made the subject of bitter reproach.

The same thing has occurred in matters civil. The Porte begged Monsieur de Bismarck to send councillors (*mustechars*) for the different branches of administration. Their duties corresponded to those of our under-secretaries of State. These *mustechars* were appointed some to the Finance Department, others to the War Office, the Public Works' Department, the Agriculture, Trade, and Customs' Departments, etc. Their salaries varied from thirty thousand to forty thousand francs. Some of these officials, by extra jobs here and there, managed to raise the sum total of their emoluments to the modest one of fifty and sixty thousand francs. Besides that, they were literally crammed

with honours, blinded with decorations, set in brilliants, stuffed with precious stones ; their wives and daughters were decorated, and never knew the reason why ; in a word, they were overwhelmed with dignities ; but everyone took good care not to follow their advice.

This wretched German mission is like a new Cassandra, *nunquam exaudita Turcis !*

When first entering upon their duties, these conscientious Germans took their task to heart. They sought to check abuses, and improve the service. They wrote report after report, presented projects of reform, cut down budgets and straightened accounts. For all this, they were warmly thanked, but further than that they never got. They were soon forced to abandon their illusions, and let their zeal grow cool. They became aware that the Turks did not wish to do anything. Seeing that the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood absolutely declined to be awakened, they found it most expedient to slumber in their turn. They threw aside all their first desires for progress, and were content with "the trivial round, the common task" of every day, which, without yawning over-much, they managed to fulfil. The Imperial Ottoman Bank pays them regularly on the 30th of every month ; what more can they want ? They become resigned, like tutors, to whose care a stupid, obstinate child is confided.

Such *mustechars* as hoped to win a position of eminence in their own country, abandoned their appointments in the Turkish service as soon as their contract had expired. One of the most able of them wrote lately that "the happiest day of his life was that on which he left Constantinople !" For a man of worth, to draw a big salary is not all ; he has

a task to accomplish, a duty which he desires honourably to discharge ; and he chafes at being reduced to impotence, and at having, as it were, to "mark time" in a marsh.

Besides these higher officials, Prussia has sent many others of less importance to Turkey ; posts have mostly been created just for these good gentlemen to fill, all of them being paid three or four times as much as a native. There is moreover this important difference, that the native never gets his pay, while the German is protected by a contract which ensures regularity. If there were any hitch, any delay, Berlin would grumble ; and Stamboul would hasten to make amends in double quick time. In a word, Prussia has started a factory in Constantinople where Turkish officials are made to order ; and she even agrees to take back such employés as have ceased to be serviceable or satisfactory.

This was the primary cause which brought about the development of German influence in the East. The second cause has been the energetic support given by the Berlin Government to its trades and industries so as to allow them to compete with rival nations in foreign markets. Admiration was not wanting for the excellent organisation of the German army and strategic genius of its generals in the campaign of 1870 and 1871. But, as it seems to us, one ought equally to admire the foresight and the strategy with which Germany has carried on a commercial and economic war against us for fourteen years. Praise of this sort may seem surprising when given by a Frenchman ; but it seems childish to me wantonly to disparage one's adversaries, or to refuse to recognise their ability.

It is not by patriotic howls or rhetorical bursts of indig-

nation that we shall re-establish our lost supremacy. It is by studying, every hour and every minute, those elements which constituted Germany's success, and by perpetually meditating upon the means to do better still. Nothing is more irritating nor more grotesque than these *Kermesse* of brawling patriots, whose programme consists of threatening their enemies from afar, and of loudly swearing, when liquor is within them, that they will die for their country ! This sort of subscription-dinner trumpeting has already become ridiculous in France ; abroad, it brings us into discredit and serves to tarnish our reputation for taste and for good sense.

We would rather see societies formed in Paris and other great commercial centres whose business it should be to support our merchants and industrial houses against German competition, and which should devise the most efficacious means for developing the exportation of our home products. Look at what is happening on the other side of the Rhine. In Prussia, as in other countries the metal trades have reached a most dangerous crisis. Mines have had to stop working, while others are at a loss how to get rid of their stock on hand. Under these circumstances fifty four artisans, mechanics, engineers, contractors and manufacturers of agricultural and industrial implements agreed to form a society to be called "The German Union." The scope of this society is to discover new outlets in foreign markets, and to determine the price at which the Union should produce articles, so as to supplant such firms as hitherto possessed the monopoly. The society is accurately posted in all that goes on, or is discovered, in the world of commerce ; it studies all proposals for concessions,

and all tenders for contracts. It sends specialists to countries where it seems likely that business can be ferreted out.

Two or three years ago, a German engineer went through the whole of Asiatic Turkey in this way, on a voyage of commercial discovery. He travelled from town to town, examining all produce that he saw on his route, making enquiries as to its origin and market value, studying means of transport, noting such articles as were wanting to the inhabitants, copying the designs, forms, and colours affected by the natives, etc. He then furnished the Berlin Ministry of Commerce with most valuable information which should help the latter to organise a German Industrial Army, destined to conquer these vast domains.

In this way German manufacturers soon became aware that the Turk, who is always short of money, looks out first of all for what is cheap; the quality of the article matters little to him. He is not concerned as to its solidity or durability, if only the colour and the design be to his taste, and if only he have not to spend too much money at a time. While French manufacturers make a rule only to export stuffs of fine quality that will not wear out, the Germans have set about manufacturing a sort of shoddy that they can sell at an incredibly low price. We have seen and touched with our hands patterns of cloth for trousers at thirty-six marks *the dozen*, thus at *three shillings the pair*. The Berlinese, the Viennese know that the Oriental only buys shoddy, so they send him extra fine shoddy, the cheapness of which defies all competition. They also are willing to give five and six months' credit. To get possession of the market is their great aim; they

copy Eastern designs, and give their stuffs that brilliant colour dear to the dwellers in the land of the sun, but which, alas! will not resist the burning caresses of that planet. Meanwhile the French manufacturer grows indignant at such a prostitution of industry, and declares that he will never disgrace his trade mark by turning out such so-called "qualities." True, the Germans have found a way to avoid compromising themselves. They stamp on stuffs such as no manufacturer would dare to own as his, *confection de Paris*; thus they reap the profit while escaping all the discredit. It is in this disgraceful way that we have lost our trade in sugar, in candles, cloths, ironmongery, etc.

"The German Union" lately made applications to the Porte with a view to obtain the concession for a railway from Damascus to Saint Jean d'Acre. At first there would seem to be nothing in this, but the enterprise really concealed a very dangerous trap laid for us. Damascus is in Syria; and Syria has for long been opened to French influence. The inhabitants of the Lebanon district really believe themselves to be under our protectorate. Even in the heart of the country, French is spoken; and preference is given to articles of French make. At a sign from France, the Arab, Christian, and even the Mussulman tribes would rise as one man and expel the Turks for whom they cherish strong aversion. A French company built the road, some 112 kilometres in length, which connects Damascus with Beyrout; it also organised a transport service that has no rival in the East, and which is in all respects as serviceable as a railway. Seven convoys, each comprising some thirteen or fourteen

covered vans circulate daily between the two towns, while two diligences take travellers along the route in ten hours, thanks to the excellent management which provides eleven relays of horses. A great part of the caravan traffic has thus passed into the hands of the Company; and it has to-day at its disposal some eight hundred horses and mules, all in excellent condition. The port of Beyrout, the starting point of this line, is altogether a French town; it has sixty silk mills, all owned by Frenchmen, while many of their compatriots make exquisite wine in the Lebanon and anti-Lebanon districts, for which in Egypt there is already a demand. This pretty city of Beyrout, which sixty years ago had a population of thirty thousand, has now nearly a hundred thousand.

What is it that "The German Union" proposes to do? It proposes to draw all the commerce of Damascus towards Saint Jean D'Acre, into that corner of Judæa where the German element is already represented by five flourishing colonies. By this means, it can establish its preponderance along the entire valley of the Jordan, open a route towards the banks of the Euphrates, eclipse French influence in the capital of Syria, ruin the transport company between Damascus and Beyrout, while robbing the last named port of two-thirds of its importance. Happily the Porte did not accept the demand for concession, or rather happily, it laid down the prohibitive condition that no European should be employed either for the construction or for the working of the line. Imagine a line of railway constructed by Turkish engineers! The bare idea gives one a shudder.

There you have one instance. A hundred others could easily be cited that might exhibit the wary, calculating

obstinacy with which the Berlin Government aims at planting its influence in all points of the globe. We mentioned the German colonies in Palestine; let us say a few words about these. It must be admitted that they are excellently organised. To see them thus prosperous and flourishing, we sadly remembered those poor Alsatian villages that we had seen in Algeria; all the inhabitants had deserted them; the houses were falling to ruins; the fields had become transformed to marshes; and the fruit trees in the orchard became wild again. To discover the causes of such wreck would take us too far at present; and we wish to remain in Turkey.

German colonies are established at Khaifa, at the foot of Mount Carmel, at Nazareth, at Sarona, at Jerusalem, and at Jaffa. The Prussian Government has also applied for permission to form another in the important town of Homs, on the line which is to connect the Euphrates Valley with the Port of Tripoli. Mr Verney Lovett Cameron tells us that at this point the natural traffic routes cross, that which follows the course of the Orontes and the transversal route which joins the Mediterranean to the Oasis of Palmyra and to the Euphrates by the Valley of Nahr-el-Kébir. These colonies consist of some five or six hundred persons, recruited in such fashion as to represent all trades. There are carpenters, blacksmiths, saddlers, and masons, who are of service, not only to the colony, but to all the surrounding villages. Each family has a pretty house built of stone, covered with tiles, and surrounded by a charming little garden. In the centre stand the church, the school-house, a meeting-hall, and a hotel for travellers. The leading member of the colony

lives in his own elegantly-appointed villa. There are also mills, beer-houses, and store-rooms. Some of these miniature principalities have their own special mint; and coins thus struck enjoy the same circulation as Turkish money.

These little villages, so inoffensive in appearance, are really fortresses of a pacific sort, which Germany is busily constructing in this part of the world. When the time for doing so comes, they will permit her to make the interests of her sons a plea for interfering in the affairs of the country. By degrees, these agricultural cities encroach upon their neighbours. At Mount Carmel they took possession of lands belonging to the famous monastery there. The monks made appeal, but the Turkish tribunals, full of deference for Germany, reduced the land owned by the Carmelites to a strip measuring 40 *pics* (or 30 metres) round the convent. This may be cited as a good example of judicial joking. But in Turkey, judgments of this sort are pronounced daily.

The great force of the Germans lies in their solidarity, and in their sense of union. It is these qualities which enable them to form centres of Teutonism in all quarters of the globe. Wherever Germans meet, they organise associations, or corporations, or societies. The first have mainly a commercial or an industrial scope; the second carry out an idea either philosophical or patriotic; the third are chiefly choral, gymnastic, or tourist societies. Let us suppose that in an Oriental town there are twenty Germans. They begin by hiring some place where they can meet at evening, *with their families*, to drink beer, smoke their pipes, and read the papers. The words, *with their families*, are significant; for, in our opinion, it is just

this condition which gives vitality to such societies. When the colony becomes more numerous, it constructs a separate building, the cost of this being defrayed by subscription ; it starts a musical society, organises concerts, dances, and theatrical performances.

The other colonies also attempt to start clubs, and libraries, but it is always the men who profit by such institutions, for women consider themselves too delicate to frequent halls where smoking goes on. What happens then? While the husband is at the club, what do his wife and daughter do in a strange city where the art of cultivating acquaintance is far from a desirable one? They bore themselves to death, abuse the club, and use all their diplomacy to keep papa at home.

The Germans again find no pleasure in meeting unless they can bring their families with them. Every night, at the society's hall, the men chat and smoke, drink and play, while the women work, and for the children there are amusements as well. If there be a choral society, the young men and young women have a chance of making each other's acquaintance ; and such meetings, under their parents' eyes, often result in happy marriages and in keeping amorous Teutons out of mischief.

Why do the other colonies not succeed in organising such centres of re-union? The reasons are various. *Imprimis*, the German still maintains all the first ardour of his enthusiasm for German unity. He is enchanted with the idea of now belonging to a great people, and he supports with patriotic zeal all institutions which give expression to the national sentiment. Let but the hour of disillusion arrive ; let but the germs of jealousy bring forth their fruit ;

and all this solidarity will collapse and be as gall and wormwood.

Among Germans who emigrate abroad there is little rivalry, little jealousy, all being uniformly poor. They understand the need there is for mutual support and for having a common fund, fed by their modest resources, which shall give them such amusements as they best delight in,—music, dancing, and dinners *al fresco*. At such gatherings there are no expenses as regards dress, for nobody wants to deceive or to dazzle his or her neighbour. The expenditure is limited, and arrangements are all made with a strict regard to economy. Beer, the indispensable element at such *soirées*, is always to be had cheap, while German cooking does not pretend to be elaborate.

In the other European colonies, fortunes are less equal; there are always certain families who aspire to take the lead. Some women want to set the fashion in smart dress, and to make their pretty frocks a pattern for the rest to copy, while others aim at bearing off the palm for coquetry. If some society, say, the Pera Ladies' Curl-Paper Society, tries to organise a fête, it takes the proportions of a great event. New dresses are needed, and a sumptuous *buffet*, and flowers on the staircase. To drink beer seems mean; one cannot do without champagne; and heaven knows what Pera champagne is at ten francs a bottle! Under such conditions the principle of association, instead of realising an economy, becomes nothing more than a supplement to expenditure and luxury. The husband complains of such extra expense; but his wife has always got this answer ready: "I had rather not go, if I am to look ridiculous!"

By degrees the members of the Society drop away, and it slowly dies a natural death.

There are not more than five hundred or six hundred Germans in Constantinople. Despite this limited number, they have managed to start several associations or *Verein*. First on the list comes the *Teutonia*, which has excellent premises, though somewhat badly situated. The establishment includes a large hall with a gallery that serves as theatre or concert-room, a library, a card-room, a billiard-room, a bowling gallery, a restaurant, etc. The *Teutonia* is a home for musical societies, the principal of which is the *Chorgesangverein*. Here, and perhaps only here, one can listen to good choral music well performed. In winter, the choirs and bands execute symphonies and oratorios with remarkable skill; and it would really seem as if music, usually massacred in Pera, had sought refuge in the arms of the German colony.

Besides harbouring such musical societies, the *Teutonia* forms the head-quarters of the German *Turnverein* or Gymnastic Society, the Excursion League and others. This League, on all Sundays in summer, organises excursion-trips to the country. A steamer is hired and the whole colony takes part in a picnic held at some charming point on the banks of the Bosphorus or the Sea of Marmora. Under immemorial plane trees, dancing and games go on to the sound of music, which is never absent at such festivals, while at evening the company return, singing as they float back to Pera in the brown dusk some of those tender, simple *lieder*, full of grave, moving harmony. Such excursions cost little, while they do much to bind the colony together by sentiments of self-respect and of good-will. In

summer, too, there are special school treats, when the German ambassador throws open the charming grounds of his summer residence at Therapia to all the children and, with his wife and daughters, presides at the revels of all these rosy, flaxen-haired *kinder*. Such a holiday is surely one of the prettiest sights of the year.

While enumerating the German societies of Constantinople, we shall not omit to mention the Mutual Help Societies, the Charitable Associations and others. Like those of other nations, the colony has a fine hospital, beautifully situated. In all Eastern towns we shall find that the Germans possess similar institutions. At Athens, there is the *Philadelphia*; at Beyrout, they have a German club next door to the only comfortable *biergarten* in the town. Strange that in a city like Beyrout, wholly French, there should not be a single coffee-house where one might read a Paris paper! There is a *Deutscherverein* at Alexandria; at Jerusalem, a scientific society, a charitable association, etc., etc.

Do not let us infer from these facts that the German people stands first as a colonising nation. Far from it. In character, it is too heavy, in temperament, too dense, ever easily to adapt itself to its surroundings. The German hewn out of one block, is not malleable; he finds it difficult to alter the habits of his youth. Under a burning sky, he will still wear his heavy ill-fitting clothes and soft felt hat. He cannot give up his coarse, solid food, nor restrain himself from imbibing a most respectable quantity of beer. His mind is not of the inventive, unravelling sort, like that of the Frenchman. Give a Parisian *ouvrier* a piece of no matter what, and it will astonish you to see

what he can make out of it. The German can only do what he has been taught to do ; and this work he will begin every day with the same fidelity and the same care.

The difficulty of the language is also a great obstacle to the expansion of German influence. Oriental peoples have an unconquerable dislike to a grammar so complicated and to constructions so tedious and involved, whose philosophical disposition they are powerless to master. French and Italian, on the other hand, with their clearness and precision, or English, with its simplicity, suit them better. The Turkish Government used formerly to send its young men to France to complete their studies in our schools. But for the last four years it persists in despatching them to Germany. Evidently this is a very queer notion, since agriculture as practised in bleak, sandy Germany can have no sort of connection with the produce of southern countries and the hot climate of Asia Minor. But, above all things, an act of condescension had to be performed towards M. de Bismarck ! Such a piece of nonsense has, however, had the reward it deserved. Young Turks have never yet been able to master the German language sufficiently to allow them to profit by the lessons of their professors.

On the other hand, it is amusing to notice how all the Prussians, who are in the Turkish service, have had first of all to make a thorough study of the French grammar, and to have it literally at their fingers' ends. It is in this language that they give their instructions, draw up their reports, and communicate with native officials.

The Berlin Government naturally makes great efforts to alter this state of things. The study of German is now obligatory in all Turkish military schools. Moreover, two

years ago, the Council of Ministers, in order to show its willingness to comply with the desires of Prussia, was for abolishing the teaching of French in second-class schools throughout the Empire, and meant to substitute for this a course of German. That would have been a great misfortune for France, and the certain ruin of French influence in the East ! But this measure luckily met with such difficulties in its application that the Grand Vizier, fervent adorer, as he is, of the Iron Chancellor, was obliged to defer the exhibition of such base flattery. Such an attempt is, however, none the less important as a sign of the psychological state of Turkey, though no one in France, as we believe, gave the incident the attention that it deserved.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FRENCH IN THE EAST.

IF French influence in Constantinople has waned since 1870, it is not alone to our military disasters that this is due. We have also been the victims of a series of disagreeable events upon which it is here useless to enlarge.

I have no mind to re-echo the complaints formulated by our countrymen against recent ambassadors in Constantinople, imagining as I do, that these ministers were in every whit as able and as experienced as their predecessors. How comes it then that the part played by them, has for some years become such an insignificant one? From Paris, not from Byzantium, we must look for the answer.

This want of authority is the result of the shifting, incoherent state of French home policy. How many times in fifteen years, has there not been a change of Ministry? which is equivalent to asking: how many times have we not changed our policy? Whatever politician manages to lay hold of a morocco portfolio deems it his bounden duty to carry out a whole set of brand-new diplomatic pro-

grammes. Says he: "I am not like any other Minister. I bring you personal ideas as to international policy, as to necessary alliances, as to the European equilibrium. Try them; taste them and see. If they don't do you any good, they will only cost you a few millions which you will pay without a murmur." The Minister collapses with his programme. Another replaces him who is imbued with but one idea, viz., to demolish all that his predecessor had begun, and to burn all that he adored. Such a right-about-face as this is of course perfectly logical. "My illustrious predecessor," says he, with a faint smile, "submitted his programme to you; but you upset the programme and you upset him. To-day the papers spue him out of their mouth, and call him an ill-starred idiotic old woman. Thus, his programme must have been a bad programme; and we must adopt another one. I cannot say that mine will be better; but at any rate it will not cost you less."

When, at home, all is thus in a state of chronic uncertainty, what part can an ambassador play? If he asserts himself one day, to-morrow he may have to eat his words, modify his attitude and save his false position by effecting a precipitate retreat. This is diplomacy in the knitting style; drop one stitch; pick up two, etc.

Besides this perpetual diplomatic jugglery, the unfortunate plenipotentiary has to keep upon good terms with the new Minister of the Quai d'Orsay. He must enter into his policy and try to tag it on to that cut short by the outgoing Minister when the zeal of the Chamber shall have eaten him up. Now, the only thing that impresses Orientals (as well those nearer home as those in the far, far East) is the expression of will, of a will energetic, firm, inflexible.

So long as the Turks believe that they see the faintest chance of changing, they will avoid giving a plain, down-right answer; they will drag matters on, opposing all attempts to arrive at a solution by a system of studied indolence. If, on the other hand, a European Power should show that its resolution were firm, and that nothing could shake it, the Turk would then begin to reason sensibly, seriously, and consent to the concessions needed.

What has done France most harm in international debates has been the want of firm political will. Her representatives are listened to in an absent sort of way, because they only represent an authority that is weak and unstable. Let us say in passing, that if Gambetta won so considerable an influence in Europe, it was because he possessed that persevering, indomitable will and that personal energy which achieve the triumph of ideas. To-day, in 1888, if two Germans meet, the more facetious of them never fails to ask the other:

“Have you heard the news?”

“What news?”

“The great news?”

“Why, what is it?”

“Oh! Gambetta is dead!” Whereupon the two burst into one of those loud guffaws of Teutonic laughter which would seem to have been invented to scare away sparrows from cherry-trees. Note that this witticism, full as it is of Germanic salt, is repeated every day, for years. We ourselves have heard it five hundred times; and it always obtains the same success. The elephantine joke only proves with what serious fears Gambetta inspired the Teutons. His death procured them a relief so great that they have

not yet recovered from it ; it lingers, like the after-effect of a nightmare. For the Germans knew well that Gambetta had political ideas of his own, and that he was strong enough to make such ideas prevail.

Every time there is a change of Ministry in Paris, you hear foreigners say to each other with a petulant air : " But what on earth do those French want ? Can they never manage to keep quiet ? Do they still want to be brought to their senses ? " And then the Berlin barrel-organ grinds out its old tunes about Heavenly punishment and the providential mission of Uhlans.

To such petty impertinences, our parliamentary orators reply with sonorous speeches that doubtless charm their electors, tickle the national vanity, and double the sales of the evening newspapers. But while such phenomenal bursts of eloquence electrify listeners, other nations are at work, steadily getting possession of the lands which we abandon to them. In France, unfortunately, we always take grasshoppers for ants ! Europe having abandoned us in 1870, we contracted the dangerous habit of no longer busying ourselves about Europe. Our short-sighted politicians think the universe is enclosed between the Seine and the Marne ; and that the four cardinal points of the Globe are Saint-Denis, Saint-Germain, Vincennes, and Montrouge. This indifference to international questions is not solely the result of an excess of vanity ; it also results from an excess of ignorance. How many, think you, of the hundred provincial lawyers who govern us have ever visited foreign countries ? And how many know enough English or German to read the Berlin, London and Vienna papers ? These departmental lanterns, who serve well

enough to light up their own parish steeple, prove absolutely worthless when it comes to illuminating the vast theatre of European politics.

We no longer possess those generations of statesmen who, from their youth up, had been trained in the diplomatic world. When they came into power, they had already the advantage of personal relationship with the great leaders of each State. I remember that M. Albert Sorel, in one of his remarkable lectures at the *École des Sciences Politiques*, told us: "The diplomatic world is a world apart, which has its traditions, its exigencies, its morals. The men of this world are mutually acquainted with each other, and distinctions of nationality have, for them, little importance. When a Congress is held, they meet like old colleagues; each knowing his neighbour's strong and weak points. It is a world, both inaccessible and exclusive, where newcomers, neophytes, are always heard with courtesy, but rarely with attention." This observation may perhaps explain why many of our most gifted and distinguished men have failed pitifully in their diplomatic missions.

Almost the same thing might be said as regards our consular agents. They are, all of them, most friendly, obliging, and courteous, but their education has been too literary, too worldly a one; and not practical enough. They mainly care for the political, administrative, and judicial attributes of their office; its commercial side is little to their taste. To many, indeed, the most rudimentary scientific knowledge is wanting. They could neither classify a mineral, a plant, nor detect the nature of a soil. Economic questions, agriculture, and statistics interest

them little, although in this direction serious progress has been attempted during the last few years. They are flattered at belonging to the diplomatic world ; and to the price of oil, grease, and cotton they are indifferent. One can hardly bear them a grudge for this ; it is but the result of that narrow infatuation for so-called liberal education, which has dominated France for centuries, and has diverted the attention of the best minds from practical things. What an advantage for our country it would have been if our consuls, in addition to their regular course of study, could have profited by the teaching at our high schools of agriculture and commerce !

The English and the Germans choose as their consuls men who have had thorough training, which enables them to deal with economic questions. English consuls are often engaged in trade. Their superiors keep them a long while in one place so that they may make a complete study of their surroundings, acquire personal influence, and keep an eye upon all changes which the country undergoes. A consul's inopportune removal may have the most grievous results ; it is quite different from replacing a deputy attorney-general or a prefect. Our compatriots in Alexandria bitterly complain that their consul was removed just when affairs there had reached a crisis. To what disasters did not this withdrawal lead ? No Frenchman can walk through this magnificent city with other than a heavy heart as he sees its streets and buildings broken up into heaps of ruins, the remains of the iniquitous bombardment. Our abstention, at that epoch, produced a most deplorable impression throughout the entire Levant, an impression not yet effaced, yet which diminishes in proportion to the firm-

ness of our attitude towards the carrot-coloured invader.

After the consuls come the dragomans or interpreters. They have a great influence in the East, and often absorb the importance of their chief. The dragomans are usually in their official capacity, Levantines, Armenians, or Greeks, and, too often they are influenced by local or personal spite. Admitting even that their sense of equity and honour be irreproachable, their compatriots do not fail to accuse them of partiality and call them obstructionists. The choice of a dragoman is indeed a most difficult and delicate one. It might be well for us to establish (as the English have done at Ortakeuy) a school for student interpreters, where young Frenchmen could be prepared for their official duties, and so supplant the natives who now discharge them.

Frenchmen established in foreign parts often deplore the habit which our Government has got of looking at questions in a narrow, centralising sort of way. Everything on earth is not limited to satisfying the Paris Municipal Council; and it would be well, now and again to reflect upon the consequences which certain acts might have abroad. As a most striking instance, let us mention the strife between the State and the Clericals. It is not our intention to discuss the legitimacy of such expulsive measures, nor to comment upon the political sagacity of that minister who caused their adoption; but we only desire to show that from the point of view of our influence in the East nothing more harmful could possibly have been devised.

It must be remembered that all the French schools in

the East, the asylums, hospitals and hospices for travellers have been founded and are managed by priests or nuns. The College of Saint Benoit at Galata, the French College at Cadikeui, the university and schools at Beyrout with their faculty of medicine, the agricultural school at Schtôra, the French colleges of Smyrna, Aleppo, Aintab, Damascus, Cairo and a hundred others—in fact all the French establishments of public instruction, except the Imperial College of Galata-Seraï, are kept by Jesuits, Lazarists, Franciscans or Brothers. French lay teaching does not exist in the East. It may well be supposed that these monks do not profess unbounded affection for our Government. It would be a wonder if they did. At Beyrout, they say that the Jesuits held a thanksgiving service when Gambetta died. What, then, may they be expected to do on the day that Heaven takes back from us M. Jules Ferry? In declaring war so noisily against clericalism, our Government deprived itself at a blow of all its chief means of influence in the East.

Our political dissensions have also tended to produce a want of cohesion among French colonies in Eastern towns. Union, accord have become impossible. On the anniversary of their Kaiser's birthday, all the German residents assemble in enthusiastic fashion. Festivals and banquets are organised, and not a man would be missing at such a public manifestation of patriotism and loyalty. But, supposing the 14th of July, a French festival, has to be celebrated! How marked is then the disunion! The Monarchists veil their faces; the Independents and the Intransigents withdraw in a rage. Only the official personages are left, together with a few tradesmen who

supply the Embassy. So disheartening has this spectacle become, that it has been suppressed. All is now limited to a formal visit to the Ambassador, when trite speeches are delivered, and raspberry vinegar is handed round.

It is this want of cohesion which makes it impossible to found musical societies, such as those which the Germans have. Into everything the spirit of political antipathy enters.

If four Frenchmen meet of an evening to play dominoes, each one forces the other to listen to the latest views of this or that Paris paper which he has just been reading, and tries to override him with his opinion. And even that opinion is not his own; it costs him twenty francs post-free per quarter.

The Frenchwoman, again, intelligent, *spirituelle* as she is, loves to domineer. She has an irresistible longing for precedence. It would please her well enough to organise a gathering, provided she were the centre of it. If French ladies wish to set about starting a charitable association, you will see the same antagonism, the same rivalry as exist in small French provincial towns between *sous-préfète*, *mairresse* and *présidente*. The less important they are, the less they agree; that is why French society abroad is not influential, because it cannot be influenced.

And is one to conclude from all this that the French are not colonisers? They say so. But who says so? Why, the English, those islanders from the extreme West, who have the charming habit of attributing all defects and all vices to us, the drollest thing being that we naïvely repeat all these British impertinences.

Never believe a word of all that. The English have

their reasons for what they do ; and we know how much their good faith is worth a yard. We notice, on the contrary, that wherever the French have sojourned, they have left a mark not to be effaced and have won for themselves lively sympathy. In proof of this, we need only point to Syria, Egypt, Canada, Ile de France, and elsewhere. John Bull cannot say as much. Though he may have clapped his heavy paw upon a hundred points of the globe, he has never won hearts ; and his going would provoke neither tears nor regret.

Moreover, what does the Frenchman need to make him a good coloniser ? He is accommodating, and takes life easily anywhere. He suits himself to all sorts of climates and all sorts of food. He is tolerant and never worries the natives about their religious beliefs and customs. Everywhere he is liked, because the people feel that he does not wish to exploit or to ruin the country. The Englishman, on the other hand, while allowing his colonies great independence, makes a point of sapping all their wealth. He sucks them like a lemon ; and then, if they complain, he points gravely to the rind, showing that that is intact.

When passing Cyprus, our steamer took passengers on board at Limasol and Larnaca. We asked them : " What is England doing in Cyprus ? "

" She is ruining us," they answered gloomily.

If you would have an idea of the British method of absorption, go to Egypt and you will see how thoroughly disorganised is the Government. The commerce of Cairo and chiefly that of Alexandria, are in an astonishingly distressful state, while agriculture is ruined by the insecurity

which has desolated the country and even the towns. French and native officials have been removed to make way for successors shipped straight from London. Under pretext of reorganising it, the army has been annihilated. Nay, I beg pardon, English officers have taught the Egyptian soldiers these three important things—

Firstly : They have taught them to carry a little cane according to the fashion adopted by the soldiers of Her Britannic Majesty. That is always a source of profit to the cane shops !

Secondly : They have rigged out all the native fifes and bugles in those staring uniforms, with stripes down every seam, so that they look like Episcopal servants—a very triumph of that decorative art so remarkable among the sons of Albion !

Finally : They hung round them that oilcloth havresack fastened on to their back by countless straps and buckles—a most delightful addition to their dress in such a hot climate. True, the ancient Egyptians swathed their ancestors in rags and cere-cloths, but this was done only after death.

We may also add that the Egyptian soldier, like the Turk, is remarkably sober. What will happen to him after such long contact with bold British bibbers and Scotch swillers, who nightly reel through the streets, and who make the fortune of every “English Bar” opened in the land of the Pharaohs ?

Ask the merchants and they will tell you how much English rule has impoverished the country. You will hear all their anathemas hurled at “the red grasshoppers.” The persecutors of the Irish are free, then, to say that the

French are not a race of colonisers. Colonisers of the English type, no, certainly not !

The Frenchman has this characteristic quality that he can draw profit from anything and everything. The humblest artisan, the simplest sailor has a genius for invention. When he arrives in some country he examines all its products and at once discovers to what advantage they may be turned. Despite all that they say, he learns native languages quite as easily as the Englishman or the German. If his advance in these is slower, it is because everyone persists in talking French to him, and because he has never any difficulty in making himself understood.

The only reproach, if reproach it be, that can be urged against him is that he is too greatly attached to his native country and that he always cherishes an ardent longing to return there. Put him in some terrestrial paradise ; he will always think himself in exile and will sigh for the moment when he may return. It is the old story of the Parisian woman who sighs for her rivulet in the Rue du Bac ! Thus there is nothing fixed and definite in a Frenchman's establishment on foreign soil. He hires, he does not buy ; if he builds, he does not plant. For him all is temporary, transient, a state of things that lasts perhaps thirty or forty years ; but the secret hope ever exists within him of seeing his native country again.

The Englishman, on the other hand, is always at home, because he brings away with him, even to his very boots, a bit of England. He builds himself a solid cottage with a garden planted full of fine trees ; he has an English governess ; and he makes tea in an English teapot, drinking it out of an English teacup, while eating plum cake

Huntley & Palmer's *Wafer* and other genuine English biscuits. He can imagine himself to be in England. In fact he is there; and he never feels the need to return thither.

English families are so numerous that the parental ties are soon loosed. As soon as they reach adolescence, John sails for Australia, Archibald for Ceylon, Edward for the Cape, William for Canada, while Horace, the eldest, remains at home. As for Mary, she marries a vice consul in America, Fanny is the wife of a Hong Kong surgeon, and Kate starts with a clergyman for New Zealand. Perhaps they will never see one another again. Each of them will become a fixture in the land whither fate has brought him, and each will breed his batch of little Englishmen and Englishwomen, who, following the example of papa and mamma, will send to London for their teapots, their braces, their mustard, their pickles, their boots.

France's colonial weakness is associated with the grave question of the falling off in birth-rates, which just at present claims the attentions of our economists. In our families where there are only one or two children, they are never allowed to expatriate themselves; and parents tremble when their son talks of going abroad to seek his fortune. Rather would they have him lead a humdrum, commonplace life at home.

"My son, you must go to the bar!"

"But, father, to get called to the bar is not to get a position?"

"No; but it's a means of creating one. You will become a magistrate—perhaps a deputy. The barrister's gown leads to the ministerial portfolio."

“But I have no turn for eloquence!”

“Then you’ll get some Government post. There you will vegetate on a ridiculously small salary; but that won’t prevent your making a wealthy marriage. Fathers of families with handsome dowries to bestow adore Government officials.”

Our youths are also less prepared to rough it in the Colonies than are the English, who, from childhood, are accustomed to ride, swim, shoot, and row, besides being proficient at gymnastics, boxing and fencing, cricket, lawn-tennis, football. Jumping and running also take up a great portion of their time. If called upon to leave the mother country, they are more muscular, and in better condition than our young *bacheliers*, emaciated by college life. Since the terrible lessons of 1870, the need of a more careful physical training of our youths has been felt in France; but at the same time they are expected to study too many things at once. Their mind is overtaxed at the cost of their body. One single point is sufficient to settle the question. How many young men in France can ride well? Now, in Asia, Africa, or Australia it is impossible to live without you can ride fairly well.

Wherever we went in the East, we noticed to our deep regret that the number of French residents had considerably diminished. At Constantinople this was the case, and also at Smyrna, Beyrout, Alexandria and Cairo. But by a curious compensation, the use of the French language has made the most astonishing progress. Formerly throughout Turkey the sole language spoken was Italian. Now this is only talked by harbour masters and sailors, while French is spoken everywhere; in the drawing-room, the office, the

restaurant or the shop. If two strangers meet in the street, it is in French that they accost each other first. In an office, either public or private, all instructions are issued in French. Posters, circulars, advertisements, and the names of streets are all printed in French. No Perote lady is thought to have finished her education before she can speak French fluently.

Our country has, then, an instrument of considerable influence in its hands. Will it know how to profit by it? Will it know how to retain it? Language is the most powerful of all propaganda, for it carries with it ideas and opinions. The East is thus open to our journals, novels, and plays. If France have lost some of her military and commercial prestige, and if she do not stand first in all branches of art, at least nothing has been able to weaken her superiority in literature. All other countries debate about the productions of her authors, and all the theatres in the world live by her dramatic works. If other countries cannot carry off our authors, they often try to copy and plagiarise them for their theatres. This at least is one way of acknowledging our pre-eminence in literature.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PERA AND PEROTES.—TURKS AND TOMBS.—MUSIC AND THEATRES.—HOW THEY DANCE IN PERA.

OUR eagerness faithfully to paint the actual situation of the French in the Levant, led us to make a zig-zag journey across Asiatic Turkey and even through Egypt. We will return to Pera and there remain.

Pera consists mainly of one long artery called the *Grand' Rue de Péra*. The term *grande* only applies to a part of the street, for half of it is dark and narrow, while the other is broad and well laid down with pavements of the proper sort. This latter part was re-constructed after the great Pera fire in 1870.

It is in this street that all the life of the European part of Constantinople is centred. There you must walk at morning, at noon, and at night ; it is there where appointments are made ; it is there where everyone is fated to meet. On these two hundred yards of paving-stone, characters are taken away and reputations blasted ; calumny

and vice make this their market, and virtues are sold there either for cash or on the credit system.

Every Sunday the young Perote mashers parade on the pavement, all tremendously "got up," to see the pretty women come back from church ; and in Pera there is no lack of pretty women, who are all quite pleased at the admiration offered to their powdered faces and multi-coloured gowns.

Churches in Pera are hidden away in obscure corners or behind houses in back streets. This would seem to prove that the Turks were once not so tolerant as they are to-day. Formerly, too, bells were forbidden, and at most monasteries in the East, the faithful are still called to prayer by striking long bars of wood or iron with a mallet. But the Pera churches have bells which ring out peals in perfect freedom. Service is over, and down the dark streets all the pretty sheep scamper in flocks. Every eyeglass is adjusted and trembles nervously, while a joyous sound of babbling and laughter mounts to heaven. The crowd thickens, for the Latin, Greek, Catholic, Armenian, and Protestant churches are gradually emptying their contents. Far away in some corner there is even a poor little Maronite church. Only Syrians, Abyssinians and Copts are wanting to make the whole council complete. But see, the march-past is at an end ; bows and hand-shakes have been exchanged ; and everybody goes back to lunch ; the young incense-burners disperse, each conscious of having done his duty.

Walking is impossible in the streets that branch off from the *Grand Rue*, so steep, so dirty, so ill-paven are they, full of holes, where by day you may break your ankle, and at

night, your neck. The great yellow dogs lie curled up and half hidden in some of these gins and pitfalls, while round about there are their sturdy puppies all at play. Every street is full of such cavities, which, if they prove dangerous to human beings, are at least useful to the poor dogs as impromptu kennels. Without a garden to grace them or a shop to make them bright, these streets seem utterly empty and lifeless, and this effect is heightened by the untenanted ground-floor and dingy staircase which lead visitors to the habitable portion of every house. In this lower part, dirt and smells prevail.

Pera happily possesses two pretty gardens, both with beautiful views. The more frequented is the *Petits Champs* or Municipal Garden, situated in a central position overlooking Stanboul and the Golden Horn. At sunset the water reflects all the flaming sky against whose crimson glories are arrayed the dark slender minarets, like a file of giant lances. The garden has been laid out on the site of an ancient Turkish burying-ground, and what strife and cunning did it not cost ere the Mussulman authorities would consent to the desecration by *giaours* of this hallowed spot! To Turks, indeed, it was well nigh sacrilege, who bury their dead a few feet under the soil and are moreover careful to dig a passage connecting the corpse with the outer air. Such noxious exhalations are of course dangerous to public health; but nowadays the burials in Constantinople are performed with greater care.

The garden thus after much difficulty was laid out and has grown gradually larger. The Turks willingly overlooked its desecration; and they may now often be seen at the *Petits Champs*, drinking their glass of beer while listen-

ing to the strains of Signor Ricci's respectable orchestra. The other constant visitors to the garden are the European residents, the Jews, Greeks and Armenians. The *demi-monde* is represented by a few powdered ladies of the music-hall who have retired, to live upon their own incomes and upon those of others. There are many damsels too, of the sort that once made Mabilie and Cremorne so popular. In Europe they are not so bold, but keep within the bounds of that modesty which suits their sex and the views of the police. But in Pera they take a higher social rank ; you may see them in staring dresses at the theatre and the public gardens ; they even sing for a charity if they can. They sit at the same tables and sip beer in company with honest women ; they exchange leers with favoured faithful customers, or else strut along the garden walks wriggling their huge bustles, of the latest Parisian make, which are warranted to render emotion at will. As chaperon they have an elderly lady who puts on all the airs of a dignified duenna.

Gay deceivers who come to Pera for the first time are surprised to find how easily they can seduce, on the very day of their arrival, the pretty girl promenaders of the Petits Champs. Burning glances, radiant smiles, and exchange of notes, an assignation, nothing is wanting to make the romance complete. Then, when evening comes, the eager tourist rushes off to the address given, and is flabbergasted at finding so many ladies seated in the drawing-room, and at seeing that his tender affection has all been priced and tarified by a considerate "aunt." O gay Lotharios, distrust these doxies, and leave all your illusions at the mouth of the Bosphorus ! All here is commercial,

love included. If a little lady with tip-tilted nose talk to you of her lover, never let such a euphemism mislead you. Lover means principal client, a regular customer ; but the preference has nothing exclusive about it ; and the privileges that are his may at this moment be yours.

The other garden, no less municipal than the first-named, is that at Taxim. It is in a far more neglected, desolate state, though it has a finer view, for it looks over a large part of the Bosphorus with the Dolma Baghtché Palace. To the right lies the Sea of Marmora, and Scutari opposite, a picturesque city with all its panes that the sinking sun transforms to cubes of burnished gold. Discouraged doubtless by so few visitors, the band wails in doleful fashion, while the little open-air theatre, damp and decayed, is dropping to pieces.

It is a matter for regret that these municipal gardens, instead of being opened free to the public, are let to proprietors who charge a piastre (or two pence) entrance. In truth, there is not a single shady, pleasant corner in Pera where one may sit gratis and take the air. The military bands never play for the public, though occasionally they are allowed to perform at some Embassy fête. But that is an amusement for the stucco, stuck-up "society" of Pera, not for the public. The military bands, like the army, belong to the Sultan, and are kept exclusively for Imperial use.

In the Levant, Mussulmans and even Christians are wont to meet in graveyards, which form their favourite place of promenade. The Orientals have not the same superstitious feelings about burying-grounds that we have. They sit down on the tombs in the shade of dark cypresses,

call for coffee and their *narghilé*, and so spend a day in stolid placidity. So the post of *cafedji* to a cemetery is a lucrative one. The immense burying-grounds at Scutari are those chiefly visited by Mussulmans; vast enclosures containing magnificent cypress-trees. The tombstones stand so close together that it is difficult to walk past them. They usually consist of a large slab with a hole in the centre, which is supposed to communicate with the corpse, and at the top and bottom are two marble columns which resemble huge wax tapers. A commoner sort of tombstone is made in the form of a marble figure rather like a Guy Fawkes, each fossil man being decorated with a fez or a turban, according as the tomb was set up before or after the reform in Turkish head-gear, introduced at the beginning of this century by Sultan Mahmoud. From afar, the effect is that of a petrified army, that Perseus, when passing with Medusa's head, might have hardened into stone. All round them women sit in groups; their purple, red, violet and yellow *feradjis* (or loose cloaks) seem at a distance like huge poppies or peonies growing here and there among the graves. Their little girls in bright frocks and with wavy, dishevelled hair, gambol about on the grass, while itinerant vendors of food pass in and out, and do a thriving trade. The whole scene is one that might tempt any painter.

This sort of *dolce far niente* among the meadows of eternal repose savours too greatly of the charnel-house to please the Perotes, little inclined as they are to philosophy. And they have found out for themselves, in the environs of Pera, a place where they can "spend a happy day," or a happy hour. Their choice fell upon that unspeakable suburb Chichli! Surely the idea was the oddest ever bred

within Perote brain. Imagine a dusty, arid highroad, laid bare on all sides to the burning sun; not a tree, not a flower, not a drop of water; only a little tawny grass on one side, and a batch of ugly brick buildings on the other. In the centre runs the tramway line, its rails and paving stones being the sole ornament of this enchanting site. The tramway ends at this point and the Company has its stables here, which was doubtless an inducement to Perotes to make the place their favourite *rendezvous*. No vegetation; no flower-beds; no fountain; nothing to charm the eye; nothing but the white dust that powders you, and the sun that laughs. What can he be laughing at? In this dry, disagreeable spot, five or six sheds have been put up, under which chairs and tables are arranged. There are even one or two dilapidated hotels. Such a desolate plateau commands indeed a rather fine view, but Perotes are careful to turn their backs on the panorama, and sit at little tables in the beer-sheds overlooking the tramway line. Thus beer-drinkers on the right can spend their day in placid contemplation of beer-drinkers on the left. Occasionally a blatant band discourses music such as one might expect from a herd of wounded rhinoceroses; or blind beggars with cracked guitars thrum till they get pity and piastres; but as a rule the clink of pint-pots and mastic-glasses falls sweetest on the Perote ear.

All is flat and vulgar, here; it seems a sort of sickly attempt at diversion; such sheds are the very emporium of dullness, the home of the hackneyed. Only now and again the landscape is varied by the sailors of some embassy despatch-boat who, crimson with pleasure and exercise, gallop furiously past on hired steeds. That Chichli should

be in vogue as a pleasure resort is the more strange considering that the environs of Constantinople are admitted to be the most lovely in the world, and the Bosphorus abounds in enchanting spots for recreation and refreshment. One is dumbfounded at such absolute want of perception of the beautiful. For that matter, the Levantine, narrow-minded money-grubber that he is, understands little or nothing of the beauties of nature. With him, the artistic sense is still in a rudimentary state. If he builds a house, he pitches it on a point where it is most readily seen, never caring for the environment of shady trees or of rippling brooks.


Along the whole length of this great city of Constantinople which stands on the borders of the Bosphorus, there is not one attractive *café* which might be made a place of resort on fair summer nights and whence one might watch the silvery moonlight as it falls on domes and minarets that flank the trembling sea. Yet what a scene is this of Stamboul by night; how moving, how memorable! Perotes, however, are not poetic; they care for none of these things; and even if they did, they would find it hard to gratify this taste for music and moonlight on the Golden Horn.

We have depicted Chichli in all its barren hideousness, as well as the two gardens on which the world of Pera depends for its outdoor refreshment. Now, let us speak of indoor delights. No mention need be made of those melancholy music-halls, (or shall we say hooting-halls?) of the seventh, tenth-rate order. For they are really only the lobbies of low gambling hells. No respectable family can ever enter such pestilent establishments, where the waiting

is done by large-bosomed ladies whose splitting stays enclose an insatiable stomach and a most hospitable heart. It is curious to note how the institution of women-waitresses has become general in the East, in Constantinople, Smyrna and Cairo. In Pera restaurants, however, the waiters are men, mostly Greeks, who do their work very smartly and well.

Occasionally, in the winter season, opera and operette companies try their fortunes at the two available theatres. But they usually come to grief. The *impresario* disappears one fine morning with the cash-box, leaving the members of his troupe, rampant and gnashing their teeth. In summer, Italian opera is performed *al fresco* in a garden. The entrance-fee is only five piastres, or a shilling—cheap music this, certainly ; but often far from bad. Such a way of passing one's evenings is among the pleasantest. Then conjurors, gymnasts, and performing cats or monkeys put in an appearance to break the monotony. Nearly all such entertaining persons are at once invited to show off their tricks at Yildiz, where, as it seems, the court is often hard up for amusement. They get handsome fees, (a hundred and two hundred Turkish pounds) besides jewelled snuff-boxes and decorations. Such gala nights are of course the best and surest sources of profit to the poor impresario or mountebank, for the Perote public is very loth to unloose its purse-strings. At times some juggler or comic singer succeeds in amusing His Imperial Majesty, when he is forth-with attached to the palace, receives a good pension, and can live at Constantinople in monied ease.

Twice or thrice in the season some courageous individual will organise a concert, the tickets being sold at prices fit



to terrify an indifferent public. The ambassadresses must send round the tickets, otherwise the concert proves a dead failure. And if you get a ticket, you must pay up your pound and look pleasant, or else run the risk of offending Her Excellency. Pera "high life" attends the concert, more from motives of politeness than from love of music. The Russian Embassy is specially zealous in backing up any ninth-rate musicians from Muscovy. Some of these vocalists and pianists have not the faintest claim to serious attention; but, just because their ambassadress gives them support, they succeed financially, if not artistically. We remember a Hebrew lady from Odessa, with a spiral mouth and a voice like a fog-horn. She came to Pera, she sang, she conquered.

From the list of such entertainments we should certainly not omit the public, charity, and fancy dress balls. They are the acme of all that is ridiculous.

This is pretty much what a public ball at Pera means. A crowd is got together in a small theatre, and in the centre of the pit an orchestra is stationed which occasionally plays a waltz or a polka, and then waits for half-an-hour or so. During these interminable waits there is no other amusement except walking round and round the theatre, for there are no seats or chairs on which to rest, chat and flirt. Each couple walks gravely along, their steps being regulated by those of their predecessors; and this gyratory movement continues until dawn. In the centre of the circus you may see a most respectable gentleman whirling about. He wears irreproachable evening clothes, swings arms and legs about like windmill-sails on a common, and gives himself an infinity of trouble. Who is he?

Professor Trippington Pump, who has kindly undertaken the duties of M.C. at this delightful ball. In other words, it is he who has to shout out: *En avant deux ! Balancez vos dames !* He stimulates the dancers, revives the ladies, recruits the *vis-à-vis* and puts them all in their proper place. Each quadrille needs a good half-an-hour's preparation ; and nothing is more ludicrous than to see the wretched professor rushing from one couple to another to stop the dancers from leaving their places, and vainly trying to establish a symmetry that, so soon as secured, is spoilt. Nobody ventures to contest his authority, but nobody attends to him ; and it is this which drives him to despair. How great then, is his joy when he can at length exclaim, with arms stretched wildly in the void, *Traversez !* In the second figure he passes down the double line of dancers and touches each on the breast with his finger, giving them the countersign, *vous sortez, vous restez, vous sortez, vous restez*, etc. As for the last figure of all, it becomes a series of endless, labyrinthine manœuvres, which vary according to the fertility of imagination possessed by the professor aforesaid.

Be it noted that, admission to these little fêtes costs the modest sum of twenty-three francs or three francs more than the ball at the Paris Opera. True, this is only the official figure ; there are always obliging vendors who hang about the entrance to the ballroom, and will sell you a ticket for a medjidié, or four francs fifty cents.

In ordinary Levantine drawing-rooms, smoking goes on the whole evening ; the ladies, especially the elder ones, set the example. After dancing a polka you have the satisfaction of offering your fair partner a light when taking her

back to her place. It must be allowed that some of the ladies' smoke in a very seductive manner, holding their cigarette with the tips of their tiny fingers and dispersing the blue clouds of smoke by little coquettish fan-flaps. But what an atmosphere after three hours' dancing in this opaline mist! Sometimes in a corner a young mother sits suckling her child, smoking all the while. A partner comes to claim her, so she buttons up her dress, hands over baby to a friend, flings away her cigarette and dances the *schottische*.

Greeks and Armenians have their national or religious festivals, and on such occasions some fifteen or twenty thousand persons assemble in the open air. On the 1st of May they hang a wreath of flowers over the door of every house—a pretty custom, which makes the streets fragrant with all the first perfumes of the spring.

Greek festivals abound; almost every day they pay visits to some fountain whose waters are famed for their miraculous virtues. Tents are pitched there; sheep are roasted whole; and there is much eating and drinking on the sward, while to amuse the company, mountebanks and bears arrive, and dancing gipsy girls, who sing quaint Turkish songs as they clap their hands. Mandolines are heard everywhere, as well as the cornet and the clarinet. This latter is an instrument that has a great vogue in the East. A negro is as inseparable from his clarinet as a Spaniard from his guitar. To see the bucolic simplicity of such gatherings, one might believe that this was the golden age. Instead of that, it is the age of gold, which is by no means the same thing.

Weddings are generally occasions for ruinous expense, as each family deems itself obliged to dazzle the guests by truly Oriental luxuriousness. There are dances, dinners, excursions, picnics, and the festivities last for several days, when it is found that all the savings of bride and bridegroom have gone to pay the piper. The bride buys heaps of trinkets and dresses—enough to last her for many years. In certain provinces of Asiatic Turkey, the husband has to give his bride ten dresses, ten mantles, ten bonnets, ten pairs of boots, etc.—a sort of decimal prodigality. Many such gifts are faded and spoiled before they can be used.

To resume : Pera is a little town at once pretentious and tiresome. By picking and choosing, it is not impossible to form rather a pleasant circle of acquaintances ; but the great want in such circles is the want of intellectual conversation—of conversation that braces and lifts the mind. One is soon tired of the perpetual gossip and dull twaddle, just as one grows sick of the *rahat lo koum* or other cloying sweetmeats which are offered and eaten all day long. People chatter too much and do not talk enough ; they go to bed with weary head and empty brain. Spiteful persons, of whom there are many, give a certain dash of piquancy to the general dulness ; and every Perote lady loves to strew the cayenne pepper of scandal. She receives her friends, entertains them ; but when they are gone, reviles them. Such people, therefore, as care for something pleasanter than to have social sewerage filtered into their ears, remain at home, and spend their evening with a few good books that have just come from Europe. In the day, one can

walk or ride to some interesting site ; and these excursions, with perhaps a little drawing, and a great deal of music, suffice to divert and refresh the visitor. In fact, he can have all sorts of amusements in Pera, if he be always careful never to profit by the amusements which the place professes to afford.

CHAPTER XIX.

SWINDLING AND SWINDLERS IN PERA.—BOGUS BORDEAUX.—
THE ART OF IMITATION.—SCENT, CHEMISTS AND QUARANTINE.—IN THE BAZAARS.

THAT resigned mortal who dwells upon the banks of the Bosphorus may say to himself each day as he rises: "I am going to be robbed all day long." This morning meditation prepares his mind for subsequent torment. He will be robbed; by his servants who have an understanding with the tradesmen; by the restaurant-waiter who will try and palm off upon him money that is either false or that has lost some of its value; by the sarraf who exacts a monstrous percentage for changing his money; by the banker who cheats him on the exchange; by officials either private or public, who invariably make a slip in their calculation; by lawyers; by the police; by his friends; by his parents; by his brother, if he have one. He will be robbed when on foot, on horseback or in the tram-car; when paying toll at the bridge, or getting his ticket at the steamboat piers; when wrangling at the post-office or the telegraph depart-

ment. He ought to take this great principle as a rule : Every time he has to pay, he will be swindled from outside ; and everytime he has to be paid, he will be swindled from within. Thus there is the theft exterior and the theft interior ; the swindle active and the swindle passive ; the swindle positive and the swindle negative. It has quite a classification of its own, and one that must be firmly defined.

More than once a straightforward Frenchman said to me : "It is impossible to do business honestly, here. You are so swindled, first by one person and then by another, that you must cheat like everybody else, or you will soon be ruined." And, he added, with an engaging air, "But we always try, you know, to deal fairly by our friends and compatriots !"

A payment is a tremendous business. Each party counts the money over three or four times, turns over the silver, refuses such pieces as are worn or defaced, bites the medjidiés to see that they are not of lead, and makes the louis d'or ring on the table with imperturbable coolness. If you were a famous coiner of bad money, or a notorious thief, one could not take more precautions to be sure that your money were sound and true. Don't be vexed ; your Western susceptibilities must be put aside, for you are in a centre of brigandage here that is universal and permanent. Each does his best to defend himself, nobody is bound to trust you ; and, if you trust other people, then, so much the worse for you !

The natives do more than this. If they have to get change for a medjidié they will not part with their medjidié until they have counted and checked every

piastre and every para. Not money only, but goods also are counterfeit in Turkey, where the art of forgery has no limits. Let us take a few examples from the wine trade.

In Pera and Galata you will find Grande Chartreuse at 3 francs 50 cents the litre; Martell's Three Star Brandy (Fine Champagne) at 2 francs 50 cents a bottle; Benedictine at 2 francs 40 cents, and *liqueurs* of the best brand at 1 franc 80 cents. Needless to say that such liquids are only fairly successful imitations. The manufacturer's eye might be deceived, but not his palate. The Levantine tradesman, in cleverly dishonest fashion, has bottles made exactly like the genuine ones, with labels and corks accurately branded, capsules of tinfoil; nothing is wanting. The finest thing is, that he never omits to print the famous warning "Every bottle not bearing our signature is counterfeit," or, "Each label bears the words in red letters, *Imitators will be punished by law.*" All this is on each sham bottle as well as the signature and advertisement in red letters. The forger is even mindful to reproduce the name of the lithographer of the genuine label, which is printed in tiny letters at its corner.

As to the liquids contained in such precious bottles, they are imitated with some skill. But on tasting them one soon perceives that they have been made with a common sort of alcohol, and that their aroma is due to artificial means. Germany concocts a variety of such beverages, essence of fine champagne, of curaçao, of maraschino, etc., and she even furnishes a dry powder with which to make wines. In selling a litre of Grande Chartreuse at 3 francs 50 cents, the wholesale and retail merchant make a total profit of 50 per cent, which reduces the cost price of this

imitation of P. Garnier to 1 franc 75 cents. But for the Oriental, whose primary condition is that the thing be cheap, such shams suffice. He looks at the label, and thinks that he has got his money's worth.

The same thing with wines. Everywhere you will find Château Lafitte, Château la Rose and Léoville, which vary from 2 francs to 4 francs 20 cents the bottle. The exterior is quite correct; the label has all its distinguishing simplicity; on the long cork stands the name of the fortunate proprietor of these famous brands; the seal is irreproachable; everything down to the packing of the case is imitated with scrupulous fidelity, if such words as "scrupulous" and "fidelity" may be used in such a connection. Yet, just calculate the cost price, and you cannot for an instant doubt but that the whole is an impudent forgery.

You enter a restaurant and ask for Medoc. The waiter brings you a bottle which bears a glass medallion at its neck, on which is printed the name of the vintage. You uncork your compatriot carefully and find the wine has a bouquet absolutely unknown to you. But the monstrous mixture is powerful enough, as the considerate manufacturer has not forgotten to add a goodly quantity of spirit distilled from potatoes. The colour is superb; and to get this, there has evidently been a lavish use of elder berries, in which such a thriving trade is done on the banks of the blue Danube. Now, would you like to know what this precious wine is? The explanation is at once simple and instructive.

Every year Constantinople is visited by Hungarian, German, and Italian wine merchants, who invite restaurant-keepers to give them orders. As their wines are extremely

cheap, the restaurant-keepers are only too glad to give them the preference. The customers, however, of such restaurants prefer French wines. So what has to be done? The buyer makes it a *sine quâ non* with the seller that the wine shall be delivered in bottles exactly like Bordeaux bottles in size and shape, with label, seal and capsule attached, precisely similar to a model which he gives. This model is that of the French wine merchant, who hitherto had supplied him with the genuine article. Then, the unscrupulous contractor gets the counterfeit labels made in Germany or Hungary; he dresses up the bottles in their imitation French uniform, and thus the restaurant-keeper can offer his customers Bordeaux that in truth does not cost him dear.

This dishonest traffic produces three results. It robs the Bordeaux firms of their customers; it makes it impossible for French commercial agents ever to defy such dishonest competition; and it brings our products into disrepute in the East. The consumer at length discovers that there is a marked deterioration in the quality of these sham wines, when he will not fail to be informed that the fault lies with the French wine merchants who adulterate their wines. Indeed it has actually been stated (we quote the exact words) that "there are no longer any wines in France since the invasion of the phylloxera and all the Bordeaux and Burgundy are nothing more than artificial mixtures." The inference from such a charming statement is of course obvious, viz., that the Hungarian and Italian wines are far purer and cost much less. In such way it is that our trade with the Levant dwindles and decreases. The fraud has been exposed more than once; but no serious effort has so

far been done to put a stop to it. A French Chamber of Commerce exists at Constantinople, but this institution is mainly occupied in protecting the interests of French merchants in the East, and not of French merchants in France. So with Paris articles, such as candles, chocolate, perfumery, etc. In this latter branch of trade we came across a sample of the art of reproduction which deserves honourable mention. Empty bottles of a certain famous scent which have the firm's name stamped on the glass are bought back or manufactured, and are then filled with scent of a fourth-rate sort ; but care is taken that the cork be soaked in the real perfume. When a customer comes he is made to sniff the cork ; and as he cannot smell any further than the tip of his nose, he has to pay three or four francs for cheap alcohol highly diluted and rendered aromatic by a few drops of some sort of essence.

Of late years the Germans have imitated many of our products. Everybody knows that. Funnier still, other Germans have now begun to counterfeit those who were first in the field ; it is the imitation of imitation, as Mürger said. But where will it all stop ?

There is a corporation in Constantinople to which public attention ought specially to be drawn. It is the estimable corporation of chemists. An apothecary in the East is a sort of high-class grocer who sells his wares to customers that are ill. In France, he is always a person who, either thoroughly or superficially, has made certain special studies and who considers himself entitled to sell at a high price that which costs him very little. But as a rule he sells you genuine drugs. Not so in Turkey. In Pera, doubtless there are two or three good chemists who have passed

examinations other than those of the *Malade Imaginaire*. But the point lies how to discover these. Their prices at all events are so high that poor people avoid their shops and go to wretched third-rate places in Galata or Stamboul where they buy potato starch, believing it to be sulphate of quinine, granulated bread-crumbs, or sugar and water coloured with hollyhocks.

You are so lucky as to have a good doctor, in whom you can put faith, and him you ask to name some trustworthy chemist. He replies : "Go to Z—— ; he is a young man, just starting in business, and has his reputation to make. Tell me afterwards what effect his drugs produce upon you, and I will take note of this, so that I may find out how far I can trust this young chemist." That is assuring, is it not ? You are turned into a machine to test the purity of an apothecary's drugs, and you become a sort of walking alcöometer ! This reminds me of a Paris doctor, full of wit, if not of integrity, who often would say to me : "Take this medicine, if you really wish to ; if it does not do you any harm, it won't do you any good !"

The poor Mussulmans have no such matters for embarrassment. They bring the patient's shirt and a cruse of water to their *imam*, who repeats a few prayers and lays his hands on the objects. The patient dons the shirt and drinks the water ; nor does this hinder his recovery. If he can walk, he goes to one of the chief dervishes, lies down before him on the ground, while the venerable old man plants both feet upon him and treads him conscientiously underfoot. We saw this operation performed upon babies of one and two years old. One would think that the *imam*, by walking thus upon their frail little bodies,

would break their bones and crush out their life. But no ; the babies seemed to suffer little pain during so perilous a gymnastic feat.

Chemists make us think of epidemics ; and that leads us on to mention another abuse which we took greatly to heart, and which results from that delightful institution quarantine. At Constantinople everybody lives in perpetual fear of cholera. As soon as a case of cholera is reported to have occurred anywhere in Europe, quarantine is instantly declared, which from four or five days may abruptly be prolonged to fifteen. Let us, however, admit that, thanks to such a system or to something else, Constantinople has been protected for several years from cholera, if not from all epidemic diseases.

The traveller arriving from Europe *via* Varna, learns on his entrance of the Bosphorus that he must remain in quarantine at Kavak for eight or nine days. This is the first unpleasant surprise. The second is that the Austrian Lloyd Steam Navigation Company will charge him 25 francs extra per diem during quarantine. Twenty-five francs without wine—a higher price than that of the first hotels in Switzerland, Paris or London ! The luckless tourist will only get very second-rate food and attendance for his money. Hundreds of foreigners are caught in this trap every year. They utter cries of indignation and swear that they will make the most awful complaints to headquarters. But once on land they trot about Stamboul and forget this trifling annoyance. The quarantine nuisance has been kept up for years like this, yet no one endeavour to abate or abolish it. One hapless Pasha travelling with his wife and daughter was nearly left as a pledge on board

the Lloyd steamer. His bill came to 750 francs for ten days' quarantine; and he had not got so much money—a misfortune which may happen to any Pasha.

We are not desirous to examine *seriatim* all the different departments of trade and industry in Constantinople. Else we might have to prepare a big volume entitled *Dictionary of Shams and Counterfeits*; and this publication could never be completed. Yet let us say that if a man is willing to live as the natives live, he can find things that are good in quality and cheap in price. But if he cannot do without certain European articles he is sure to pay a tremendously high price for them, or else be content with wretched imitations. The further he goes from Constantinople into the interior of Turkey, the higher will be the price charged. In Mesopotamia a pair of boots costs 62 francs; common cloth, 15 francs a yard; inferior tea, 11 francs a pound, a bottle of ordinary cognac, 12 francs 50 cents; and a bottle of beer, 3 francs 50 cents.

At Constantinople even the prices are not uniform. You pay more in Pera than in Galata, and more in Galata than in Stamboul. For this reason a coffin-seller in the European quarter wrote over his shop-entrance "Galata Price" so as to decide customers who might still be hesitating.

It is in the Bazaar of Stamboul that one may most profitably study the commerce of the East. This bazaar is something colossal in proportion, and one can form no proper idea of it without having visited it dozens of times. It is this Bazaar which supplies the whole of Asiatic Turkey as far as the Caspian Sea, the Persian frontier and the valley of the Euphrates. All the local bazaars of

Ismidt, Broussa, Trebizond and Sivas, are nothing more than its branch agencies. It receives annually more than two hundred and fifty million francs' worth of merchandise. Nothing is more fascinating than to wander through these long, vaulted galleries between lofty arcades striped with black and white. The sides of the cupolas are covered with quaint frescoes, the massive walls having little narrow windows which admit bright rays that illumine the obscurity, gilding the ostrich eggs and glass vessels suspended from the roof and throwing bars of light upon the rich stuffs, silks, tapestries and brocade. In the midst of all these vivid colours and lights a dense crowd circulates, most of it attracted by curiosity. Above each arcade the merchants hang out their signs, which are either little boats, impaled cats, the horns of a gazelle, pine-cones, or monkeys. The shops are built into the walls of each gallery, like grottoes, and the seller sits in front of them on a sort of raised platform encircled by divans, and covered with carpets or matting. If a client of importance arrives, coffee and cigarettes or a *narghilé* are at once offered to him. The sides of the grotto open as in a fairy scene, and reveal bale after bale, fold upon fold of gorgeous stuffs, that are speedily piled up before the spectator. Then the haggling or *bazarlek* begins. The seller uses all his wiles, and makes out his case with wonderful eloquence. He is a consummate actor, with irresistible bursts of dramatic frenzy. You are ruining him! You are robbing him of his last morsel of bread! He loses, through you, his entire week's earnings!

If the buyer be a European, the scene requires a third person, the interpreter. No sooner does the wretched tourist

show himself at the door of the bazaar than he is treacherously assaulted by a band of dragomans; Jews, most of them, or fit to be Jews. They dog his steps, walk round him, press close to his elbow and shoulder, croaking out meanwhile their offers of service. It is no good for the poor visitor to try and shake them off; such parasites stick to him like burrs and fix their claws in his great-coat. They go on talking, even though he do not answer; they track him if he slips away; and if he stop, they block his passage. When the victim, losing all patience, sends them to the devil, they make a bow and pretend to go there; but, a moment afterwards, they reappear. If you stop at a shop, they join your debate, profiting by your ignorance of the language. The merchant, though quite well able to speak any language, pretends not to understand you. "Ne deior?" "What does he say?" he asks the interpreter who thereupon instantly takes possession of you, seeming wishful to protect you from the merchant's rapacity. No comedy was ever played to greater perfection. You end by thinking that you have bought veritable treasures at cost price, and in a moment of emotion, you slip a *baksheesh* into the interpreter's hand. This is the climax. The play is over, and you are once more free. The sly interpreter thanks you and goes back to the merchant who allows him ten per cent. on the price of the article sold.

The bazaar dragomans have really marvellous cunning and presence of mind. It comes very near the art of divination. According to your age, your nose, your accent, your look, they can foresee what it is that you want. They have winks and imperceptible smiles which are their secret language with the merchant. You are still hesitat-

ing, while the price has already been fixed by the two confederates. You are simply the man that pays. They will recognise you directly you appear, and they recollect the very article that you fancy. They remember, too, how you came two years ago; they can tell you what you bought and how much you paid; and they will instantly show you the same article at a far cheaper price. Do you want to pick up a necklace cheap? In a moment the rumour circulates all through the bazaars, and you are waylaid by forty merchants with forty necklaces all alike. You should see with what lofty gestures the dragoman waves them off. "No, no," says he, "let the *tchelebi* alone. The *tchelebi* knows what he wants!" Yes, the gentleman knows what he wants; but the dragoman knows better still, and will diplomatically make you fall in with his choice. He ends by getting hold of your name and address. One fine morning he walks into your room laden with articles which might tempt you. Don't you like this? Would you rather have something else? He opens the door and calls in a colleague, standing outside on the stairs. In two minutes you are surrounded by carpets, yataghans, embroidered shawls, brass bowls and plates, slippers, frankincense, etc. He pulls an old manuscript copy of the Coran out of his pocket, which an aged priest desires to sell; then he displays earrings, amulets, and attar-of-roses. It would need a fortune to buy it all. If you don't send him packing, he will come back next day with a fresh assortment, and his confederates will waylay you at the corners of the streets. He talks or murders any and every language; but he only understands such things as are to his advantage. He constantly quotes the

name of some exalted personage of your nationality who, it appears, honoured him with his confidence. Your consul and your ambassador are both customers of his. He speculates at once upon people's vanity and impatience.

Take another scene of the same comedy. Suppose you are a European knowing the languages of the country, and so freed from the tyranny of an interpreter. You go to the bazaars with a friend who has just arrived from Paris. Never feel hurt if the merchant say to you in Turkish : "Make your friend pay the price I ask, and we will split the difference." And whatever you do don't be indignant at such a proposal. In Turkey, such dirty tricks are played by friend upon friend, by relation upon relation. The voice of blood cannot silence that of *so much per cent.*

The bazaar is a town ; it has its mosques, its fountains, its restaurants, its exchange. It is a place of meetings and of promenades ; a place where amorous intrigues are begun and bewrayed, for Turkish women set a watch upon their lords, using their female friends as spies. Mussulman law forbids veiled women to enter the shops, as it is feared that in their dark recesses other trades may be carried on and other bargains driven than those in printed calico and flowered silk. The same law excludes boys from these shops, and merchants may not keep youthful assistants to serve customers. Turkish ladies of rank never enter shops in Pera, but always sit in their broughams at the door, and have things brought outside to them to look at. The custom, however, is one that is gradually disappearing, and there are many *hanoums* now whose sense of modesty does not prevent them from sitting about in Frankish shops all the afternoon.

The Bazaar is surrounded by immense Hans; in one, Persian carpets are sold, in another raw wool, in a third silks, stuffs, etc. The visitor must penetrate into the narrow gloomy little shops in these Hans if he would get correct ideas as to what is called Oriental wealth and magnificence. We have no intention here of trying to speak about what Théophile Gautier has spoken with all the sincerity of a passionate connoisseur, and all the consummate art of a great man of letters. But we refer readers to his pages, ablaze as they are with all the rich sunlight of the East.

Such immense traffic as this in the bazaars explains the great commercial importance of Constantinople. The Eastern metropolis receives from Europe all her manufactures, and distributes them throughout Asia; and this privilege she owes to her incomparable position, placed as she is between two continents and two seas.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LOCAL PRESS.—JOURNALISTIC TROUBLES.—THE LEECHES
OF THE PRESS BUREAU.—CENSORSHIP AND SENSELESS-
NESS.—HOW BOOKS AND PLAYS ARE EDITED IN TURKEY.
—CUSTOM HOUSE CRITICS AND THEIR LITERARY INSTINCT.

THE intellectual activity of a country is measured by the number and the worth of its journals and newspapers. In this respect, the Pera thermometer stands at zero. There are few large cities in which the Press is so utterly insignificant.

The poor newspapers themselves are not wholly responsible for this, which is mainly a result of that servile bondage in which the entire Oriental press languishes. For many reasons the Ottoman Government does not love the light, or at anyrate it desires to have the monopoly of the lamps. What it would prefer would be that no paper should ever allude to it; but, failing that, it has reduced the Press to tolerance, and this tolerance to a minimum. The *régime* is the soothing, suave one of perpetual decrees and arbitrary suspensions. It is well-nigh impossible for the papers to speak of home policy, of religion, of the Sultan,

of the Government, of the army, of finance. Only art and literature remain as topics free for treatment. A sorry theme indeed. Art and literature in Pera! A proper dish for Lent!

Newspapers are forbidden to reproduce articles from European journals which might possibly sow seeds of discontent among the Turks. Nor are they allowed to protest against abuses, point out reforms or insist upon improvements. As political dogma they have to admit that everything in Turkey is perfection, and consequently that any effort at progress is needless and chimerical. The same sort of thing goes on in another capital which is called Pekin, in the extreme East. Decidedly it is a case of "extremes meet!"

Not a paragraph, not a line of any newspaper may be published before having been duly "revised and corrected" by the representatives of the Press Censorship who every morning go the round of the newspaper offices in Pera and Galata. They are not men of particular training or particular intelligence, and often they cannot seize the subtleties of a language whether it be French or English. But such austere boobies live in perpetual fear of drawing down upon their fez the lightnings of the Grand Vizier. And they prefer to err on the side of precaution, doggedly suppressing all passages in a leader or a paragraph which they do not rightly understand. Their general rule is, "*If in doubt, strike it out;*" and scratch! goes their red pencil through all your night's work with its high-sounding adjectives, (five syllabled words delight Perotes) striking metaphors and glittering sentences. Suppose you write anent Bulgaria, "the lazy pipkin seethes upon the flames

of Europe." How mortifying to see such a graphic metaphor doomed by dunderheads to the wastepaper basket ! But in such tortures the luckless Pera editor writhes every-day. In the East, phrases and plump lady-tourists share the same fate ; the censor manipulates the former, and the custom-house officer, the latter. Despite such precautions, a paper is often obliged to appear with one or two blank columns, as an article may be suppressed at the last moment and there is nothing ready to supply its place. At the head of such white patches you read an obituary notice to the effect that " At the request of the Censorship, such and such an article has been consigned to the editorial portfolio." A newspaper is not allowed to have a special service of telegrams ; they are all opened by the authorities. It can only profit by the drowsy Havas and Reuter agencies, the *pot-au-feu* of the entire Press ; even their scraps of vague information, issued in excruciating French, are reviewed by the argus-eyed Ottomans, who suppress any passage that is either disagreeable or compromising.

Let not the luckless paper attempt to bring to light the details of some huge fraud or official scandal. In a moment a notice of suspension would be served upon it by the Porte, to bring it to its senses, and compel it to be silent. A slighter measure for checking such outspoken conduct is to publish an edict, saying—"The newspapers are prohibited from touching the Bulgarian question." And this mandate will be followed next day by—"The subject of Egypt may not at present be treated by the local Press." So it goes on ; and in this way Turkey deliberately throttles public opinion.

The facts just given are in themselves sufficient, we fancy, to excuse the beggarly miserable state of the Con-

stantinople Press. Each paper is a gelding, a eunuch, and every morning the shears of Mehmed and the pruning hook of Aristote repeat the horrid process of castration. If the poor paper rebel, not scissors are the instruments of torture applied; but one fell sabre-stroke cuts off its head. Under such conditions one may tolerate its note of grovelling sycophancy, its bad grammar and bad taste when weaving garlands of adjectives for the Sultan and his councillors. On His Imperial Majesty's day of birth or of accession, the newspapers illuminate their front page with a piece of truly Corinthian prose, and let off their grandest literary fireworks. Of course, in making such gaudy chains of superlatives, editors have an end in view other than that of filling their columns with fudge. By such verbal pyrotechnics and such a noisy show of obedience and devotion, they can manage to win pardon for some petty error or imprudence; such excess of servility is a means to secure for themselves a few grains of independence.

This abject servility of the Press explains to our readers why so many crimes can be committed in Turkey, why abuses exist and why all progress is impossible. Public opinion being thus gagged, the high are free to commit the most flagrant acts of injustice, while the low become indifferent like fatalists, and even lose all sense of their rights. The Government is thus able to wallow in its corruption, for it has nothing to fear from the wrath of the masses. Neither cries nor laments can get a hearing, Turkey being one huge *Tour de Nesles*.

The Anglo-French and French newspapers in Pera of course represent various shades of political feeling, and all try to make their readers believe that they are officially

inspired. Thus one print has Hellenic sympathies, another is devoted to the Bulgarian cause and bolsters up Prince Ferdinand through thick and thin, while a third is reputed to have a heavy subvention from the Russian Embassy. A Pera paper is made up pretty much as follows. First, in larger type, comes the leader, a paraphrase of Havas' laconic telegrams. These telegrams are the gospel of the day; pegs on which to spin out a political sermon. If Havas shabbily distribute none, then the leaders are cooked up with paste, scissors, and an old copy of the *Débats* or the *Times*. There are always copious extracts from the European papers; inoffensive bits of news but badly chosen and badly assorted. The main paragraph of interest among local news refers usually to some Embassy fête or "diplomatic picnic," though great edification is also to be got from reading the official list of promotions, appointments, and decorations of Government functionaries. Then come murders, thefts, fires and assaults, with a vague tale or two about brigands who have roasted helpless gardeners in petroleum, but whom the police have not yet caught. Such stories gain in point and charm by being told in Perote French and Levantine English. Add to these, the dull gossip about the doings of "Pera Society," whether Mrs Frumpy is in town or at Therapia; whether a delightful dinner was given by Mrs Lumpy who "received her guests with her well-known grace," and there you have the whole paper, which costs twopence, and is certainly dear at the price. Occasionally there may be some critical notice of a concert or operatic performance. It is always exaggerated—either over-sour or over-sweet. To such a pass, then, has the Pera Press come; and, we repeat, it

cannot be blamed for this. The unfortunate newspapers do not even pretend to fill their pockets, but only try to fill their columns without drawing down upon themselves a bastinado from the Government. The Government forbids them to deal with higher subjects, so they must stop on the ground-floor and interest themselves in the tittle-tattle of the servants' hall. If it were not for blackmail, *chantage*, no Perote journal could keep afloat. But that subject we will not touch. The two Anglo-French newspapers are the *Levant Herald* and the *Oriental Advertiser*, while among those dailies published only in French, are the *Stamboul*—the most piquant paper of all—the *Turquie*, and the *Phare du Bosphore*. Mr Edgar Whitaker is editor and proprietor of the *Levant Herald*, the *Oriental Advertiser* being carried on by Mr Bellis, a Greek. An Irishman of undoubted wit and humour, Mr Baron Hanly, has the management of the *Stamboul*; and it is to him we owe it if the paper he conducts be brighter and more readable than the rest.

First among Turkish papers stands the *Tarik*, which is considered to be the official organ of the Government. Its editor is a writer of merit, and a poet not without renown in his own country. He is styled Excellency, a title which struggling reporters in Europe, alas! will never reach. All official news regarding the Palace and the Ministry appears in the *Tarik*, and is accurately and vividly reproduced by the Perote prints, who often take the pains of summarising its leaders on the burning questions of Bulgaria, or of England in Egypt. In such articles, however, there is little beyond trite remarks and praise for the well-known sagacity of the Ottoman Government.

The *Terdjuman Hakikat* counts as the second Turkish journal, but its importance, either literary or political, is nil. Among Greek papers the *Neologos* and the *Constantinopolis* take the lead, the former being very carefully edited. The Armenians have several newspapers of their own, such as the *Arevelk*, written in Turkish but printed in the Armenian character. There are also Hebrew, Arabic, Spanish and Persian papers, which all command a public.

Nearly all the chief Continental journals keep a paid correspondent at Constantinople. The *Times*, the *Standard*, the *Daily News*, the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Koelnische Zeitung*, the *Secolo*, the *Débats*, the *Temps* all have their representatives whose work is really far from easy, as they may not telegraph the truth ; and often their messages are suppressed by the censorship. In moments of crisis, the situation of correspondent becomes critical also. During the stirring events in Bulgaria, correspondents flocked thither from Russia, Germany, Hungary, England, Roumania and Italy. But what was their horror to find that they could not despatch telegrams to their respective papers. Every telegram was "edited" by a barbarous censor, who lopped off any word or sentence which contained news, leaving sometimes little more than the signature and the address !

A plan adopted by Constantinople correspondents is to send their telegrams under cover to a friend at Varna or Sophia, begging him to send it on. This plan, if it succeed now, failed signally during the worst period of the Bulgarian enbroglio ; for the Government doggedly refused to let private telegrams be forwarded ; and the correspondents, being unable to correspond, had dolefully to return. One of these unfortunate persons had the imprudence once to send

his paper a story about the little lake which the Sultan had had constructed in the park of Yildiz, and on which His Majesty was wont to take pleasure-trips in a steam-launch. It seems that, in order to fill this pond, Pera had been left without water for several days. The indiscreet journalist was promptly invited to leave Turkey, and until the day of his going he was closely watched.

The censorship does not limit itself to worrying the newspapers, but extends its tender mercies to the whole of literature. Some author has the audacity to publish a pamphlet in Turkish. He must first send his manuscript to a college of *ulemas* who examine it with closed doors. If something in the pamphlet do not please them, they calmly refuse to grant the necessary authorisation to print, giving no explanation for such arbitrary conduct, and never pointing out which was the objectionable passage. Thus the new-born book is stifled in its cradle.

The censorship of books which enter and which leave Turkey is another gross imposture. Let me briefly describe my own experiences with the distinguished scholars who preside over this literary lazaretto. I can vouch for the facts as being strictly accurate.

On my arrival in Constantinople all my books were examined by a representative of the censorship. They were then given back to me, and I was told that thirty-five works (or about a hundred volumes) had been kept back for further scrutiny. I was at a loss to imagine what books they could be that had excited the suspicion or the disgust of these fastidious book-tasters. And by dint of a few medjidiés judiciously distributed I discovered that the *Index Expurgatorius* ran thus :

Chateaubriand *Les Martyrs*.

Voltaire *Siècle de Louis XIV.*

Bouillet *Atlas de Géographie*.

Lord Byron's Works.

Poitou *Voyage en Egypt.*

Hugo *Les Orientales*.

Voltaire *Théâtre, etc.*

The censors had also held back provisionally :

La Vie Privée et Publique au Moyen Age et à la Renaissance, by Jacob.

Costumes Religieux et Militaires (same author, and all the other volumes in this series).

Don Guéranger : *Sainte Cécile et la Société Romaine*.

Frédol *Le Monde de la Mer*.

Liais *L'Espace Céleste*, and about a dozen others.

In a word, all the handsomely-bound books with engravings and coloured plates had been put in quarantine. The knowing censors thought from their showy outside that these works were of great value and that, being very anxious to recover them, I should make any sacrifice to get them out of their barbarous clutches. Indeed, by degrees I managed to get back a certain number of books, but only by spending a certain number of medjidiés, while other volumes were still retained. Most of these, after seven or eight months' delay, were sent back to France addressed to a friend of mine. The rest are lost, including Byron and Victor Hugo. Perhaps by a little extra *baksheesh* I might have succeeded in liberating these noble poets; but I had had enough of senseless censordom. Apropos of poets, Dante is now shut out of Turkey, because in a part of the Divine Commedia, he has put Mahommed into

Hell! On my leaving Constantinople I was asked if I had got among my luggage any translation of the Coran! Oh! childish question! For in Paris anyone can buy a copy for twopence! The censorship of plays and operas is no less ridiculous. The performance of certain pieces is interdicted to-day and authorised to-morrow, then once more suspended, and so on. The *Ballo in Maschera* and *Don Carlos* may not be performed because there are a conspiracy and a murder of a prince in them; the same objection is raised to the *Huguenots*, *Macbeth*, etc.

In the East the sole existence permitted is the vegetable existence. Every facility is granted to you for that, but the cabbage must only never take upon itself to think!

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FUTURE OF TURKEY ; WHAT WILL IT BE ?—POSSIBLE RE-
CONSTRUCTION OF A GREEK EMPIRE.—FROM MOSCOW TO
STAMBOUL.—THE BANQUET OF NATIONS.—THE EVIL OF
THE EAST DRIVEN FURTHER EASTWARD.

WE are neither diplomatists nor sonnambulists. We have never had the honour of interviewing M. de Bismarck, General Kaulbars nor any of those great persons who decide the fate of empires. We have never been present, not even when hidden under the table, at a meeting of the three Emperors. So that it is impossible for us to know what future is really in store for Turkey, if indeed these exalted personages know so much.

To wish to foretell the march and issue of events in the East would be an act of foolish presumption. With each day unforeseen complications arise ; the bonds of alliances are loosed and there are for ever fresh combinations, sudden as those of the bits of glass in a kaleidoscope. The critical period dates from the deplorable Crimean campaign which cost France so dear ; the solution of the question seems now near at hand. That is what everybody knows for

certain. What solution will that be? That is what everybody cannot tell.

We can only report upon the actual position of rival nations and weigh the value of their moral and material resources. We can state what is the respective situation of the Oriental peoples and what are their aspirations. The law of nationality is perhaps not an absolute one in political matters, but it has an undeniable influence on the march of events. The examples furnished by Italy, Germany and lately by Bulgaria prove this.

In examining the East one recognises a primary and incontestable truth, viz: that all European Turkey, the islands of the Archipelago and all the littoral of Asia Minor are Greek-Hellenic by blood, language, religion, interests and affection. The inhabitants of these parts long for the time when they shall again belong to their mother country; it is the *Grecia irredenta*. Surely such aims are ambitious, considering the actual condition of this little State, but that is not to say that such aims are absolutely chimerical.

Greece, properly so-called, has only 1,700,000 inhabitants; let us add 2,500,000 for the populations scattered throughout European Turkey and 1,400,000 for Asiatic Turkey and we get a total of 5,600,000. From this number must be deducted such pseudo-Greeks as call themselves Hellenes because they hate the Turks; and there are others who from various causes have lost their sense of patriotism, and their love of country. Let us then put the total roundly at 5,000,000 Greeks. We have already spoken elsewhere in this book of the race's wonderful vitality, of its rapid increase, and of its singular power of

assimilation. We may calculate that in fifty years there will be nine millions of Greeks; and that in a century their number will exceed twenty-five millions. When that day comes, can Europe afford to disregard their importance?

Let us not forget that in European Turkey the Greeks are more numerous than the Turks; they form more than half of the total population (2,500,000 Greeks out of 4,790,000 inhabitants). At Smyrna, in Asia Minor, there are 120,000 Greeks against 40,000 Turks(?) Add to this that in these countries the Greeks have nearly all the commerce and industry in their hands, besides all the lesser trades, and many of the wealthy banking establishments.

They possess most of the schools, while the entire sea-board is virtually theirs. We may, then, without rashness, predict that the coming century will see the reconstruction of a great Greek empire in the East. ()

So much for the future. But from now to then, what will be the course of events? If we review all the phenomena of European politics for the past century, if we consult all the most competent authorities on the Eastern question, it is no longer possible to doubt that sooner or later Russia will come to Constantinople. She will come there, because that is her traditional aim; because it is of paramount interest to her to establish herself at the gate of the two continents; and finally because she possesses the power and the resources necessary to realise so grand a scheme.

The opportunity has hitherto been wanting to the Emperor Alexander to sever this new Gordian knot. When such severance occurs, there will be tremendous strife among the European Powers, and one of them will

certainly sacrifice the Dardanelles so as to obtain the valuable alliance of Russia.

The situation has already become greatly changed since Russia crossed the Balkans, nor could the Adrianople fortifications nor the ramparts of Tchataldja check the Czar's eagles in their flight towards San Sophia.

Russia again has got a military stronghold in Batoum which she has transformed into a formidable seaport town. It is a great step forward in the direction of Trebizond and Erzeroum. Samsoun and Ineboule will later be her prize ; the Black Sea will become a Russian lake ; and the eagles of Muscovy will encompass Constantinople on the right hand and on the left, pouncing upon their prey from the European as from the Asiatic side.

Such a prospect has nothing terrifying in it for France. For what, after all, does she care about the fate of the Black Sea or about the nation that rules the Dardanelles ? One thing alone ought to claim all our interest in the East, viz., the fate of those Christians placed under our moral protectorate. But never let us compromise ourselves in such a piece of Quixotic chivalry as the bolstering-up of Turkey, an ally at once burdensome and impotent.

How far does Russia intend to respect the rights of Mussulmans who have lived on European territory for four centuries ? Does she dream of a Turco-Russian agreement—some kind of *modus vivendi* which shall yet preserve the phantom of the Osmanli's might upon the Bosphorus ? From Russian diplomatists, anything, everything may be expected, even the sight of Holy Russia protecting Turkey against her friends of yesterday,—all of them more or less disinterested succourers of the Sick Man.

What, too, will be the respective situation of Greek and Slav in these regions? The Hellenes cherish a profound antipathy for the Russians; they already imagine that Turkey in Europe is their property by right. How then will they tolerate the new invader? Will they be content with an enlargement of territory on the side of Thessaly and with a few islands of the Archipelago?

On to all these grave questions, other lesser ones are grafted, for all the European Powers have interest in the East.

England already owns Cyprus, and she does not intend to let it go, being a nation without any sense for restitution. She will also make a point of securing either on the Adana or Lattaquia side a line of route towards the Euphrates valley and the Persian Gulf. Germany will plead for her colonies in Palestine, and for the necessity of their proper expansion. France will claim the Lebanon district, which has for years been under her moral protectorate, and the populations of which would hail her as an emancipator. Finally Russia, already omnipotent at Jerusalem, will probably desire to establish a station on the Suez Canal route, reserving thus for her fleet the means of making a naval attack upon India, which her armies threaten by land. Austria, who was promised Macedonia and many other compensations, will complain that she has been forgotten. Crushed, strangled between the Russian colossus that will block the issues of the Danube, and the Teuton colossus that will talk of completing the work of German unity, bitten, too, in the heel by Italy, poor harrassed Austria will doubtless have to pay the expenses incurred by the Triple Alliance!

And what will become of Turkey when all the Gargantuas of Europe give rein to their monster appetites? Evidently, her position will be a most precarious one, for she will find herself confronted with the most civilized nations in Europe and who regard her as a semi-barbarous people. For four centuries she has lost five minutes a day on all her neighbours. As a consequence, the discrepancy is now a formidable one, and it is difficult nowadays to look upon Turkey as a European nation.

Admitting even that by some compromise more or less practicable she is able to keep Constantinople, her centre of action and of influence will probably be transferred to Asia, to those high table-lands overlooking the Euphrates. And with such removal would all trouble for her cease? Alas! we fear not, for then the fight between Turk and Arab would ensue, who, though their creeds be the same and their customs similar, mutually cherish seeds of antagonism.

As will be seen the Eastern Question still exists in the East. But it may drift gradually further from Europe towards the Indian Ocean, like those cyclones that, having devastated whole countries disappear beyond the horizon. Yet distant rumblings tell us that their fury is not yet appeased, but that it has burst anew upon remoter lands.

APPENDIX.

While this book was going through the press, we chanced to fall in with a little pamphlet which has become excessively rare, the first instalment of a work to be entitled "Minor Memoirs of Turkey," and edited in excellent style by an Englishman. It bears the date 1886, and is full of curious details and promised revelations of the most exciting sort. Unfortunately, it was seized by the Egyptian Government immediately after its appearance. We extract from this document the following edifying list of *Baksheeshs* with which this unique pamphlet ends :

LIST OF BAKSHEESHs RECEIVED BY DIGNITARIES OF THE OTTOMAN COURT:—

<i>From a Railway Company</i>				Turkish Pounds.
	Turkish Pounds.			
.....	30,000	Remitted by J. Effendi and the Directors of a Galata Bank		125,000
..... Bey, secretary	5000	Remitted by Baron to the Court Chamberlains		60,000
..... Bey, secretary	5000	Agent: A... Effendi		
..... Bey, chamberlain	5000	Remitted to the Palace for the Railway Company		50,000
..... Pasha	5000	Agent: A Galata Bank		
..... Pasha	6000	Remitted to the Palace for the ... Cannon Factory		100,000
..... Pasha, minister	4000	Agent: B.....		
..... Pasha	5000	Remitted to the Palace for the concession of the Constantinople waters		40,000
..... Effendi	3000	Agent: T..... Bey		
..... Various Fees	7000	Remitted to the Palace for cloth merchants' contracts		30,000
<i>Remitted by A... Effendi</i>	<i>75,000</i>	Agent:		
<i>From the Tobacco Monopoly Company</i>		Remitted to the Palace for the settlement of the accounts of a Galata Bank		100,000
	Turkish Pounds.	Agent: The Bank Itself etc., etc., etc.		
.....	50,000			
..... Bey	5000			
..... Bey	5000			
..... Bey	5000			
..... Agha	5000			
..... Pasha	10,000			
..... Pasha	5000			
..... Pasha	5000			
..... Pasha, minister	5000			
..... Pasha	5000			
..... Pasha	5000			
..... Various Fees	15,000			

"This sum forms a small total of *baksheeshs* amounting to 900,000 Turkish pounds, or 13,800,000 francs swallowed up by the Ottoman Court. These few figures shew to what level the morality of Court officials trusted by the Sultan, has sunk. The Ottoman Court sells itself to the last and highest bidder. Further comment is superfluous." (pp. 19-20 of *Minor Memoirs of Turkey*, Part I., by Douva-ed-Erir Bey).





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